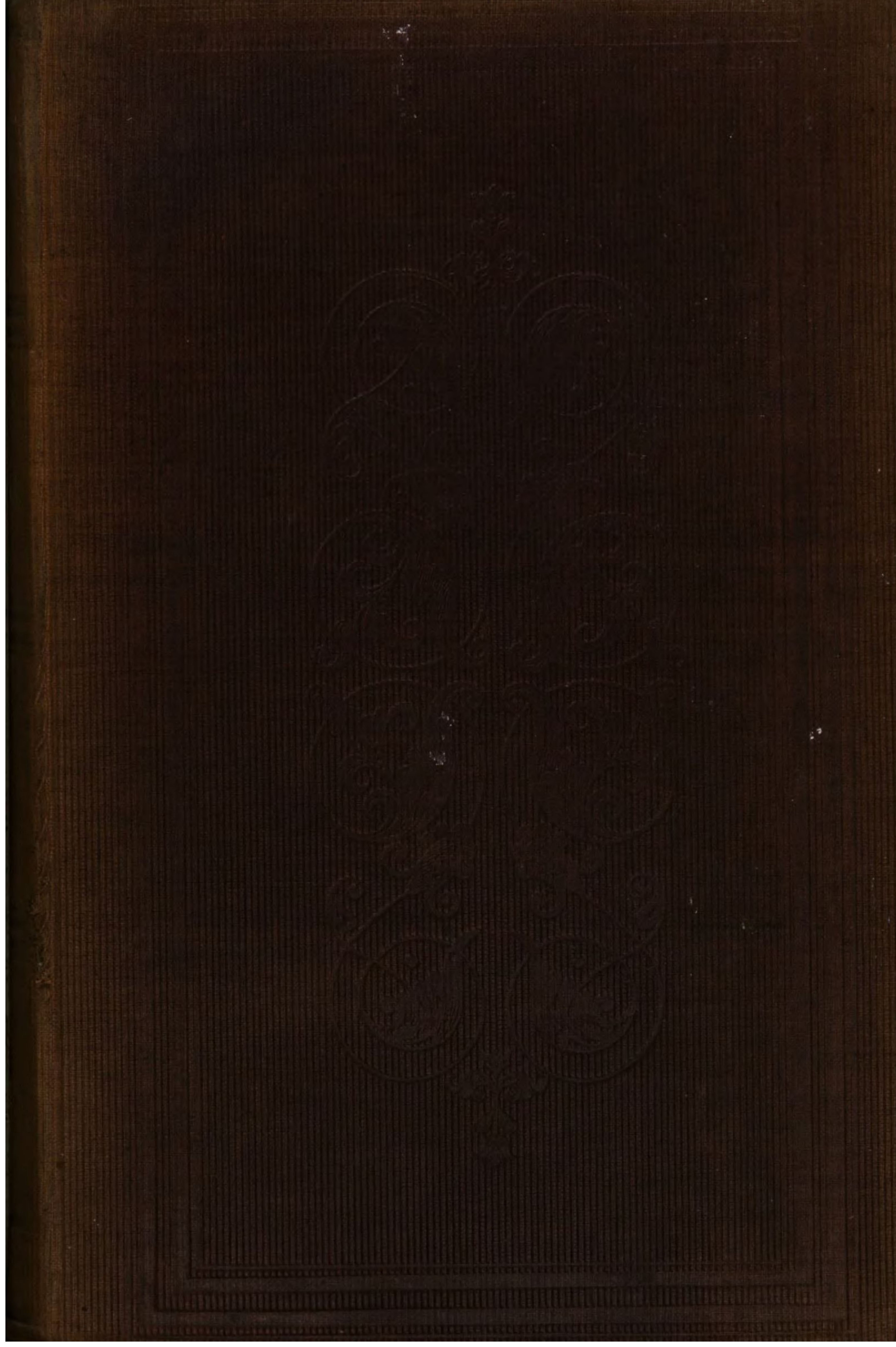




Hom:

1028^m

Mudge

THIRTY SERMONS
ON THE
LEADING DOCTRINES AND DUTIES
OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY
THE REV. WILLIAM MUDGE, B.A.

Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST.
1 Cor. iii. 11

Second Edition.

DERBY;
PRINTED BY HENRY MOZLEY AND SONS.
SOLD BY NISBET & CO., LONDON.
ALSO BY ROWBOTTOM AND WILKINS, DERBY.
AND ALL OTHER BOOKSELLERS.

1840.

WILLIAM STUBBS
OF
THE DOCTRINE AND HISTORY
OF
CONSTITUTIONAL
GOVERNMENT

The above named work is a valuable contribution to the history of constitutional government in England. It is a work of great originality and depth, and is one of the best of its kind. The author's treatment of the subject is both clear and thorough, and his conclusions are well founded. The work is a valuable addition to the library of any student of history or political science.

PRINTED BY HENRY MOORE AND SONS
15, N. B. STREET, E.C. 4, LONDON.
AND BY HENRY MOORE AND SONS, 15, N. B. STREET, E.C. 4, LONDON.
AND BY HENRY MOORE AND SONS, 15, N. B. STREET, E.C. 4, LONDON.

Bayerische
Staatsbibliothek
München

INTRODUCTION.

THE Author desires to feel he is “doing a great work” in attempting to propound what he conceives to be the Truth of God to his fellow-men. In his view, no slight responsibility attaches to authorship: and when the soul, eternity, a future reckoning, and, more than all, the honour of “that worthy Name,” are taken into the account, it becomes a matter of solemn importance what a man sends forth, through the medium of the press, for general diffusion and perusal.

Caution and prudence appear to be peculiarly desirable in times like the present: for, “if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

Should the Reader discover no great extent or depth of theological knowledge in the present Volume, it should be remarked that the Discourses herein contained were the production of a very young man in the very earliest years of his public ministry. They were delivered (substantially) in the years 1825 and 1826, and originally published in 1827. The Author was persuaded that the holy Scriptures contained sufficiently

all doctrines required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ: and, by God's grace, determined out of the same Scriptures to instruct the people committed to his charge, teaching nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) but what he should be persuaded might be concluded and proved by the Word of God. To this, in common with all his Brethren in the ministry of the Church of England, he felt pledged by his Ordination-vow: in what manner this obligation has been fulfilled, it is hoped the present Volume will satisfactorily demonstrate.

The work has been several years out of print. The Author had refused former applications to reprint it, until he was urged to do so in a manner which he could no longer disregard.

In the course of correcting the Volume for a Second Edition, D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation in Germany, Switzerland, &c. came before the Author. Let it not be deemed arrogant, or indicative of self-conceit, when he declares that the sentiments expressed in that truly admirable work, greatly affected his determination to reprint his own humbler performance. The precise accordance of his views and feelings with those of the great Reformers, particularly upon original or birth-sin, mankind's consequent demerit, and our need of an infinitely free and gratuitous salvation, surely bespeak, he would fain believe, the teaching of the same Spirit, the analogy of the same Faith, and the necessity of a simple dependence upon the inconceivable worth, dignity, and yet most gracious condescension of the same Saviour. The Author transcribed a few passages

of D'Aubigné's History, as illustrative of this remark : and as they will form the best portion of his Introduction, he will here insert two or three of them:—

In Vol. I. p. 107, Erasmus says, ‘ The sum of all Christian Philosophy is reduced to this : to place our hope in God, who, without our deserts, by grace, gives us all things by Jesus Christ ; to know that we are redeemed by the death of his Son ; to die to the lusts of the world, not merely without doing wrong to any, but doing good to all ; to bear with patience our trials, in the hope of a future recompence, and finally, to ascribe no honour to ourselves on the score of virtues, but to render praise to God for all our strength and works. And it is with this that man must be imbued, until it become to him a second nature.’

In p. 169 of the same Vol., Staupitz says to Luther, ‘ Oh, my friend, I have vowed to the holy God more than a thousand times that I would live a holy life, and never have I kept my vow. I now make no more vows, for I know well I shall not keep them. If God will not be merciful to me for Christ's sake, and grant me a happy death when I leave this world, I cannot, with all my vows and good works, stand before him. I must perish.’

Here we perceive the workings of a great mind, just emerging, under the Spirit's teaching, from Popish thralldom, and feeling after a sin-forgiving God. Subsequently, Staupitz says to the same friend, while he too was just coming to the light :—

‘ Why do you distress yourself with these speculations and high thoughts ? Look to the wounds of Jesus

Christ, and to the blood which he has shed for you : it is there you will see the mercy of God. Instead of torturing yourself for your faults, cast yourself into the arms of your Redeemer. Trust in him—in the righteousness of his life, in the expiatory sacrifice of his death. Do not shrink from him ; God is not against you ; it is you who are estranged and averse from God. Listen to the Son of God. He became man to assure you of the Divine favour. He says to you, You are my sheep ; you hear my voice ; none shall pluck you out of my hand.'

Luther himself shall next speak. No longer the monk immured in the dungeon-darkness of the Papal system ; not even the timid and trembling enquirer now, but the bold and uncompromising champion of Bible-Christianity, he says, in p. 109,

' As before I heartily hated that expression, " the righteousness of God," I began to value and to love it as the sweetest and most consolatory truth. I see that the devil, by means of his teachers and doctors, is incessantly attacking this fundamental article, and that he cannot rest or cease from this object. Well, then, I, Doctor Martin Luther, an unworthy evangelist of Jesus Christ, do confess this article, that faith alone, without works, justifies in the sight of God ; and I declare, that in spite of the emperor of the Romans, the emperor of the Turks, the Pope, all the cardinals, bishops, priests, nuns, kings, princes, nobles, all the world, and all the devils, it shall stand unshaken for ever ; that if they will persist in opposing this truth, they will draw upon their heads the flames of hell. This is the true and

holy Gospel, and the declaration of me, Doctor Luther, according to the light given to me by the Holy Spirit. There is no one who has died for our sins, but Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I repeat it once more : let all the evil spirits of earth and hell foam and rage as they will, this is nevertheless true. And if Christ alone take away sin, we cannot do so by our works. But good works follow after redemption, as surely as fruits appear upon the living tree. This is our doctrine ; this the holy Spirit teaches together with all Christian people. We hold it in God's name. Amen.'

Again, the same Reformer asks : ' How shall a man become holy ? A cordelier will reply : Put on a grey hood and tie a cord round your middle. A Romanist will answer : Hear mass and fast. But a Christian will say : Faith in Christ, and that alone, justifies and saves. Before good works, we must obtain eternal life. But when we are born anew and made children of God by the word of his grace, then we perform good works.'

A final extract of Zwingle's shall close the series. This amiable and excellent man remarks :—

' Philosophy and Theology were constantly raising differences in my mind. At length, I was brought to say, we must leave these things, and endeavour to enter into *God's thoughts* in his own Word. I applied myself in constant prayer to the Lord, to give me light ; and though I read nothing but Scripture, its sense became clearer to me than if I had studied many Commentaries. When Satan attempts to terrify me, crying aloud, Lo ! this and that thou hast left undone, though God has commanded it ! the gentle voice of the Gospel brings

me instant comfort, for it whispers ; What thou canst not do, (and of a truth thou canst do nothing) *that* Christ does for thee, and does thoroughly. Yes ! when my heart is wrung with anguish by reason of my impotence, and the weakness of the flesh, my spirit revives at the sound of these joyful words : Christ is thy sinlessness ; Christ is thy righteousness ; Christ is the Alpha and Omega ; Christ is the beginning and the end ; Christ is all in all ; he can do all. All created things will disappoint and deceive thee, but Christ, the sinless and the righteous One, will accept thee. Yes, it is he who is our righteousness, and the righteousness of all those who shall appear as righteous for ever before the throne of God.'

Thus did these "men of renown" dig the buried column of Justification by faith through the alone merit of Jesus Christ, from beneath the accumulated ignorance, formality, and superstition of ages ; and once more present a simple unadulterated Gospel to the anxious enquiries and the urgent necessities of convicted and humbled sinners.

Happily our own Reformers caught the spirit of the German and the Swiss divines, and Justification by faith remains to this day the peculiar glory of the Anglican Church. Let the reader notice Cranmer's admirable "Homily on the Salvation of Mankind," and also his "Declaration of the true and lively Faith."

If any are now found to repudiate this doctrine, and to mingle outward observances or moral works with the grace of God in justification, the Author thinks their conduct may be accounted for on one or more of the

following grounds : First, They have never experienced in their heart or conscience the righteous rigour, the condemning purity, of God's Law ; and therefore they see not the propriety nor feel the value of a free and unmerited salvation. Secondly, Human learning—"science, falsely so called"—beguiles them from Christian simplicity. And, thirdly, Too great regard is had to traditionary legends, and the recorded puerilities of the early Fathers. "Ancient Christianity," and other similar works will, we trust, serve as seasonable correctives to this attempted admixture of light with darkness, truth with error, Popery with Protestantism.

But to return to the more immediate contents of this Volume. The Author thinks they will be found materially to differ from contemporary publications of the like kind. Regard has been specially had to order and consecutiveness of arrangement and subject. The intelligent reader will perceive this in the table of Contents ; and still more so in the course of regular perusal. He deems this an advantage in every book, and wishes it to be perceived in his own. Step by step, would he lead the Christian pilgrim, until he has placed him in the full fruition of "that blessed hope" before the presence of incarnate Deity. In the meanwhile, he leaves the mind of his reader reposing in blessed meditation upon the Person and the Agency of God the Holy Ghost. Him the world receiveth not, because it seeth him not : but as many as are led by him, know and realize his love and presence. Let the reader constantly bear in mind the threefold office of the Divine Spirit : 1. to testify ; 2. to reveal ; 3. to comfort. He

testifies of Jesus ; he brings to remembrance the past, and shews us things to come ; and it is in his holy comfort that both Individuals and Churches are edified and blessed. The “ministration of the Spirit” must continue, until the “open vision” of Jehovah’s glory be seen “in the face of Jesus Christ.”

With regard to *style*, the Author would deprecate the severity of criticism. Without by any means contemning beautiful language, (for in very deed he does exceedingly admire it) he notwithstanding judges that Sermons often fail of their desired effect, 1. as being composed too elegantly ; 2. read too rapidly ; and 3. delivered too formally. The Author is too conscious of personal deficiency, in all respects, to speak censoriously of his brethren : but are we not too generally wanting in what the revered and beloved Simeon called *naturalness* ? To say nothing of language, are not the voice and the manner of the pulpit so dissimilar sometimes to the tone and manner in ordinary conversation, that we can scarcely recognize the preacher as the same individual ? Surely this is a great defect in true oratory : and we shall find our interest, and the interest also of our charge, in imitating the condescending and beautiful address of the Lord to Israel, “Come now, and let us *reason* together.”

This Edition will be found two Sermons short of the number in the former volume. One on the Importance of the Ministerial Office, as introductory to the Author’s public life, and therefore somewhat personal in its statements, it was deemed needless to reprint. The other, as preached upon a particular occasion, after one hundred and sixteen of the Author’s “little flock” of three

hundred and thirty Parishioners had partaken of the holy Supper, and therefore somewhat local in its matter, is advisedly withheld. Also some general notes, allowable in a Memorial of Ministerial Labour, (such as the first edition was considered to be) do not appear necessary in the present Volume.

Where the *Preacher* in the course of delivery, could often enlarge or explain, the *Reader* must pause and meditate. *Seeds of thought* will germinate in the spiritual and contemplative mind. Hereby apparent abruptness will be smoothened, and brevity may sometimes be prolonged.

These prefatory remarks shall be concluded by an Invocation to the Spirit, composed by the beloved and venerable man whom the Author of this Volume was ordained to assist in the sacred duties of the ministry—the Reverend Thomas Martyn, late Professor of Botany in the University of Cambridge—premising only that the lines were written by him in the eighty-eighth year of his age :—

Holy Spirit, when in prayer
I bow the knee, O be thou there ;
With heavenly thoughts my soul inspire,
Fill me with true Devotion's fire :
Whether in *Secret* I implore
Assistance from thy sacred store ;
Or with the *Household* train unite
In social worship morn and night ;
Or in God's holy *Temple* raise
My hands and heart, in prayer and praise—
Come, Holy Spirit,—be my guard
E'en till I reach my free reward ;
Illum'd by thee, the holy page
Shall light me through my pilgrimage ;
And tune my joyful heart to sing
With saints before my Saviour-king.

Most merciful Father, we beseech thee to send upon the Ministers and Stewards of thy Church thy heavenly blessing ; that they may be clothed with righteousness, and that thy Word spoken by their mouths may have such success, that it may never be spoken in vain. Grant also, that we may have grace to hear and receive what they shall deliver out of thy most holy Word, or agreeable to the same, as the means of our salvation ; that in all our words and deeds we may seek thy glory, and the increase of thy kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE ORDERING OF PRIESTS.

Ockbrook, near Derby,

April, 1840.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

The Moral Law a Test of Character.

Sin is the transgression of the Law.—1 JOHN III. 4. Page 1

SERMON II.

On Justification.

How then can Man be justified with God ?—JOB XXV. 4. 13

SERMON III.

The Righteous and the Wicked : their reward and woe.

Say ye to the Righteous, that it shall be well with him :
for they shall eat the fruit of their doings : Woe unto
the Wicked ! it shall be ill with him : for the reward of
his hands shall be given him.—ISAIAH III. 10, 11. 30

SERMON IV.

An Appeal to the Homilies of the Church.

The Lord seeth not as Man seeth ; for Man looketh on
the outward appearance ; but the Lord looketh on
the heart.—1 SAMUEL XVI. 7. 47

SERMON V.

The New or Heavenly Birth.

	Page
Ye must be born again : or, born from above ;—marginal reading.—JOHN III. 7.	59

SERMON VI.

Ezekiel's Vision of the Dry Bones.

And the hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. And caused me to pass by them round about ; and, behold there were very many in the open valley, and lo ! they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live ? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord : Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones ; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live ; And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded ; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo ! the sinews and the flesh came up upon them ; and the skin covered them above ; but—there was no breath in them. Then said he unto me, prophecy unto the wind ; prophecy, Son of Man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied, as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.—EZEKIEL XXXVII. 1—10. 78

SERMON VII.

Faith and Unbelief; with their respective Consequences.

Page

He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life : and
 he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life ; but,
 the wrath of God abideth on him.—JOHN III. 36. . 95

SERMON VIII.

The Believer's Refuge.

That I may win Christ, and be found in him.—PHIL-
 LIPPIANS III. 8, 9. 109

SERMON IX.

Forgetfulness of God : its Evil.

Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in
 pieces, and there be none to deliver.—PSALM L. 22. . 127

SERMON X.

The Better Feast.

Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall
 eat, but ye shall be hungry ; behold, my servants shall
 drink, but ye shall be thirsty ; behold, my servants
 shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed : behold, my
 servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry
 for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of Spirit.
 —ISAIAH LXV. 13, 14. 141

SERMON XI.

Decision of Character enforced.

And Peter followed afar off.—LUKE XXII. 54. . . . 156

SERMON XII.

Carelessness for the Soul reproved.

No man cared for my soul.—PSALM CXLII. 4. . . . Page
171

SERMON XIII.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper considered.

This do in remembrance of Me.—1 CORINTHIANS XI. 24. 185

SERMON XIV.

Participation of the Lord's Supper improved.

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits
toward me ?—PSALM CXVI. 12. 204

SERMON XV.

Death to the Believer: What?

And when he had said this, he fell asleep.—ACTS VII. 60. 220

SERMON XVI.

Youthful Piety: described and inculcated.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.—
ECCLESIASTES XII. 1. 233

SERMON XVII.

The Communion of Saints: its advantages.

Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one
another, even as also ye do.—1 THESSALONIANS V. 11. 255

SERMON XVIII.

Gethsemane.

Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples.—	Page
JOHN XVIII. 2.	269

SERMON XIX.

The Cross of Jesus.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.—	
JOHN XIX. 25.	284

SERMON XX.

Divine Chastisement conducive to happiness.

Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth : therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. For he maketh sore and bindeth up, he woundeth and his hands make whole.—	
JOB v. 17, 18.	300

SERMON XXI.

Ministerial Enquiry into the Welfare of a People.

Is it well with thee ? is it well with thy husband ? is it well with the child ? And she answered, It is well.—	
2 KINGS IV. 26.	312

SERMON XXII.

Causes and Cure of Religious Declension.

Wilt Thou not revive us again, that thy People may rejoice in thee ?—	
PSALM LXXXV. 6.	326

SERMON XXIII.

Exhortation to Repentance.

	Page
Therefore, also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.—JOEL II. 12, 13.	342

SERMON XXIV.

The Manner of Love bestowed upon us: its results; immediate and remote.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but, we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.—1 JOHN III. 1, 2.	356
---	-----

SERMON XXV.

Searching the Scriptures urged.

These were more noble than those at Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed.—ACTS XVII. 11, 12.	372
---	-----

SERMON XXVI.

Public Worship: how usually attended.

	Page
And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.—GENESIS XXVIII. 16, 17. . . .	390

SERMON XXVII.

Family Worship: its propriety and utility.

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.—GENESIS XVIII. 19.	407
---	-----

SERMON XXVIII.

The Prayer of Jabez.

And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.—1 CHRONICLES IV. 10.	430
--	-----

SERMON XXIX.

The Barren Fig-Tree.

Page

He spake also this parable : A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard ; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none : cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground ? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it : And if it bear fruit, well : and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.—LUKE XIII. 6—9. 451

SERMON XXX.

The might and power of God's Spirit demonstrated.

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.—ZECHARIAH IV. 6. 465

SERMON I.

THE MORAL LAW A TEST OF CHARACTER.

1 JOHN III. 4.

Sin is the transgression of the Law.

PEOPLE, in general, are little, if at all, aware of their real state or condition as fallen and accountable agents. In the knowledge of the world and of their several vocations in it, they must be allowed, commonly, to be sufficiently informed: but in the knowledge of themselves, of God, of the way of access to him and reconciliation with him, of that eternally enduring state whither we are going, and of our capacity to enjoy its sublime and holy pleasures, they will be found upon enquiry, deplorably wanting and deficient. Men may even “understand all mysteries”—may range the walks of Science, may follow the Stars in their courses, may become acquainted with the languages and histories of various countries, and in short, may “have all knowledge,” and yet, if found destitute of the *Spirit* of wisdom and of the love of Christ, they will be none other

than “sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.” The standard too, by which many persons judge themselves is erroneous. *What will MAN think of me?* is the language of a heart alienated from God, and naturally averse to spiritual excellence. Hence, how often do we hear individuals measuring themselves *by* themselves, and comparing themselves *among* themselves, and from this improper admeasurement and comparison drawing a conclusion favourable *to* themselves. ‘Oh! we are no worse than others: we are better than many whom we could mention: if it fare not well with us, what will become of them?’ are expressions well befitting such a procedure. But, on the authority of an Apostle, we venture to declare, that “those who measure themselves *by themselves*, and compare themselves *among themselves*, are NOT WISE.”^a “*To the LAW and to the testimony: if they speak not according to THIS WORD, it is because there is NO LIGHT in them:*”^b it is because no morning of gracious visitation has dawned upon their minds; and therefore, in the pride and ignorance of their hearts, they commend and exalt themselves. God’s *law*, and that law especially as “magnified” in the life and ministry of his beloved Son, is the legitimate standard to which we must refer in the examination of our religious state, and the estimation of our assumed goodness. *This* is “the glass” in which alone our “natural face” may be satisfactorily discerned; and *its* testimony concerning us will be the only true description of our moral likeness.

May our consideration of the Law at this time increase our acquaintance with ourselves, and further the best interests of our immortal souls! “Whosoever,” says St. John, “committeth sin transgresseth also the Law; for, *Sin is the transgression of the Law.*”

^a 2 Cor. x. 12.

^b Isa. viii. 20.

We purpose to notice I. The Law ; and II. The Transgression of it.

And I. *The Law* :—

The word “ Law ” is applied to different things and used on various occasions in holy Scripture. We read of a Law written on the heart ; which means, the Law of Nature or the Principles of natural conscience. We read too of “ a Law in our members ” which is the propensity of our fallen nature to evil. In John i. 17. we read that “ the law was given by Moses ; ” and here the law probably comprehends the moral, the ceremonial, and the judicial precepts of God. “ The law ” mentioned in our text, we believe to be the decalogue, or the ten *moral* precepts exclusively. *This* law, therefore, it is which forms the subject of our present discussion. Now, concerning God’s moral law, we observe that it was originally graven on the fleshly tables of man’s heart. It was this that constituted man’s resemblance to the Deity. “ God created man in his *own image*,” that is, in his *moral* likeness. There are attributes of the Godhead incommunicable to the creature. We never read that man was omniscient or omnipotent : and yet we do read that “ in the *image of God* created he him.” It must, therefore, be in sentiment, in taste, in judgment, in enjoyment, that Adam resembled his Almighty Maker. *The same mind* was in man as there was in God. Between them there existed a solemn covenant : the only condition of which was, “ Thou shalt not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ; ” and this stipulation was of the prohibitory kind, and therefore the easier to be kept. Hence the covenant which existed between the infinite Creator and the creature Man, is called a *Covenant of Works*, because *Life* was to reward obedience to its precepts, and *Death* was to be the penalty of the Law’s transgression. This covenant Adam brake :

thereupon Life was immediately forfeited ; Death was incurred ; the Law was erased from the heart ; the Divine likeness was lost, and that which was once the fairest and most beautiful part of God's creation, became a sinful and an unholy thing. The Covenant having been made with Adam as a *public* person, or as the *father* of mankind, not only himself fell by his violation of God's Law, but his posterity, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell in the fall of their father. " In Adam all die." The law, however, was still in force : its transgression must be expiated or its penalty must be endured. Obedience could no longer be the term of the covenant : the Law was broken ; and it could only now condemn the transgressor. It ceased for ever to be a covenant of works. And to shew us the greatness of our fall, the depravedness of our nature, the extensiveness of our guilt, God was subsequently pleased more fully to reveal his Law : " the law entered that the offence might abound." Revealed, however, under what circumstances and in what age soever it might be, it would still be the transcript of the divine mind—it would still manifest the moral attributes of the Deity, and shew us how glorious man once was, and into what guilt and misery we are fallen. " I CHANGE NOT," saith the Lord : His law, therefore, in its requirements, its obligations, and its penalties, must, like himself, be changeless and unalterable. To " love the Lord our God with ALL our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves," can never, to all eternity, be other than our bounden duty, conducive to our happiness, and perfective of our nature. And these two commandments are the sum and substance of the Moral Law. The history of the Law's promulgation, and the several particular precepts of it, you will find in Exodus, chapters xix. and xx.

“*God*,” amidst thunders and lightnings and the sound of trumpets waxing louder and louder, as indicative of the Eternal’s presence, “*spake these words*.” He declared his Covenant afresh,—not now as made with Man, but with Man’s Redeemer; whom ceremonies and sacrifices, for the time being, were to foreshadow; “even ten commandments, and he wrote them on two tables of stone.” “The tables were the work of God; and the writing was the writing of God.” But,—mark the awful wickedness of the human heart, see how surely the Law in its high and spiritual requirements, was blotted thence!—In the presence of their God, whilst Moses was with him in the Mount, and the thunders of Sinai were yet tingling in their ears, the Israelites “made a calf, and worshipped the molten image!” In holy indignation Moses “cast the tables out of his hand and brake them beneath the Mount.” This act significantly, as we conceive, declared how mankind had broken the commandments of their God and Sovereign. The Law, however was subsequently re-written and preserved. “Very plainly,” too, was Moses required to transcribe it; and this book of the Law was henceforward to be the standard of moral worth and the directory of human conduct to all ages and generations. Joshua meditated on it. Ezra was a “Scribe in it.” It was “a light and a lamp” in the days of Solomon. Isaiah referred to it. “Concerning the Law of his God,” was fault found with Daniel. Jesus came—“not to *destroy*, but to fulfil and to *establish*, the Law.” Christ is its “end;” and us hath he redeemed from its curse. In tranquil and sweet security may we, therefore, *now* contemplate the Divine Law; and view unappalled its pure, spiritual, and strict severity. We are *graciously*, as Moses was *figuratively*, hid in the cleft Rock of our Salvation. A fissure in Horeb screened him from the

overwhelming splendour of the great Lawgiver ; a crucified Jesus is our refuge.^a IN HIM we can venture to draw near while the Apostle Paul declares—“ *The Law is holy, and the Commandment*—alluding, probably, to that searching and condemning precept, ‘ *Thou shalt not covet*’—*holy, and just, and good.*” Let us then, from these words, a little more particularly consider the nature and spirituality of the Law.

It is *holy* ;—so holy, that it detects adultery in a thought,^b and murder in a feeling of anger.^c A covetous desire is declared to be idolatry, and the object coveted an idol.^d Well, therefore, may the Apostle say, “ *The Law is spiritual.*” Pure and spiritual indeed it is ; and more so than the generality of mankind imagine. Few believe that the law of God has to do with the affections, the purposes, and the desires of the inner man no less than with the conduct of the outer. That it *has* this reference is clear ; because, while “ *Man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart.*” Our state and disposition of mind determine our character with God : and therefore the Law whereby he governs us must be such as will extend to “ *the imaginations of the thoughts,*” as well as to the principles of outward action. The Law must, then, like its Divine Author, be pure, spiritual, and *holy*.

It is, moreover, *just*. The Sovereign Lord of all must necessarily possess an absolute right to the homage and the worship of his creatures. With whatever Law he governs them, whether it be incipiently or fully revealed, their obedience must be prompt and willing. ‘ *Why,*’ we sometimes hear it asked, ‘ *Why does the Almighty give us a Law we find it impossible to keep ? Why not*

^a Comp. Exod. xvii. 6, xxxiii. 22, with 1 Cor. x. 4.

^b Matt. v. 28.

^c 1 John iii. 15.

^d Col. iii. 5.

impose upon us less rigorous commands?'—Why? because he could not. Must not the Law of a righteous Governor be, like himself, just and righteous too? If the Law be rigorous in its exactions, and we find it a yoke grievous to be borne, the fault is in *us*, not in *it*. "God made man upright," and before our original uprightness was lost, the Law was easy to keep, and delightful to obey. Now "it is weak through the flesh;" and the Law cannot do otherwise than require either a perfect, sinless, uninterrupted obedience to its commands, or pronounce a righteous sentence of condemnation on our violation of them.

But, although the Law be thus holy and just, it is, nevertheless, *good*. It is good in its origin; it is good in its nature; it is good in its design. It was an unspeakably precious mercy in God to reveal his mind and will more fully after his Law had been violated by Adam. His "*goodness*" did the Lord proclaim when he passed by Moses in the Mount. "Wondrous things" did David see in God's law. Nor will any one acquainted with the benevolence of the Divine Character say that "*good*" is *not* the word of the Lord which he hath spoken. In all that He commands He intends the happiness of his people. When He said, in the time of man's innocency, 'Be obedient,' He said in other words, 'Be happy.' When he repeats the command, it is in order to shew us our impotence and sinfulness, and thence to induce dependance on his grace. Thus the strictness and the spirituality of the Law discover us to ourselves; the rigour of the Law awakens our fears; and the goodness of the Law kindly shuts us up to the faith of Jesus Christ. Who, then, will not "consent" with Paul, "that the Law is *good*?" Surely "*the Law of the Lord is perfect, CONVERTING THE SOUL: the testimony of the Lord is sure, MAKING*

WISE THE SIMPLE. *The Statutes of the Lord are right, REJOICING THE HEART: the Commandment of the Lord is pure, ENLIGHTENING THE EYES. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the Judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.*"

Such is *the Law*: We are to notice

II. *The TRANSGRESSION of it.*

"The transgression of the Law is SIN." Now here we have an infallible guide to the knowledge of *our real character* and *of our just desert*.

We may hence learn *our real character*. Naturally we are "lovers of our own selves; boasters; proud; heady; highminded." We see not the extent and purity of the Divine Law. "Satan hath blinded our minds." Hence we judge ourselves "rich and increased with goods; and *know not* that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Our iniquity, like that of Ephraim's, "is bound up; and our sin is hid:" we do not perceive its aggravated depth and turpitude. Many are favoured with a natural amiableness of temper and disposition. Education, too, will go far to polish the mind and manner of men. No gross immoralities may mark the outward conduct. In transactions also, of a worldly kind, there may be much that is really estimable. This glare of external goodness suffices. We are pleased with ourselves, and, it may be, disposed to say to any one whom we deem our inferior in knowledge and reputation, "Stand by thyself: come not near to me: for I am holier than thou art." But not in our *own* eyes only may we appear to be thus morally good; others too, "through the ignorance that is in them," may deem us the same; their partiality will extenuate our vices, and magnify our virtues. Thus are we deceitful and deceived. But "God seeth not as Man seeth."

“Ye are they which justify yourselves before men:” but what avails our self-justification? “God knoweth our hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” Then it naturally follows that any rule of conduct, however highly esteemed in the world, cannot be the criterion of our spiritual state. Judged by its white-washed exterior, the sepulchre may appear fair and beautiful; but what is its state internally? “As a man *thinks*, so is he.” Now, do our thoughts rise easily and spontaneously to God? Do we find them flowing in one unvarying tide of love and gratitude, towards the Author of all being and existence? Is His service our perfect freedom? Are His ways and paths to us ways of pleasantness and paths of peace? Is His Law our delight? “Judge *ye*,” Beloved. Distinguish, I beseech you, between natural, moral, educational, and *spiritual* goodness. The latter alone determines our character with God. And how deficient in *spiritual* good we are, the Law of God will shew us. From the opening of our eyes on the light of Heaven, till they close again in the darkness of Death, does the Law demand a full, entire, and undeviating conformity of heart and life to its precepts. The least possible departure from the Law (if we can imagine *any* departure from the Law to be a light or trivial matter) in thought, in word, in deed, is *sin*. “*All* unrighteousness is sin;” and sin of any kind or degree is a transgression of the Law, and a transgression of the Law subjects us to its penalty. Now, who will pretend *not* to have transgressed the Law? Is any one amongst us without fault? If not,—where is our right either to be pleased with others’ praises or to commend ourselves? See a description of the natural heart in Mark vii. 21, 22. Every precept of the Moral Law is equally authoritative and binding. “He that said,

do not commit adultery, said ALSO, do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the Law." And the same reasoning holds good of any other precepts of the moral code. Hence it is that "whosoever shall keep the *whole* Law, and yet offend in *one* point, he is guilty of all." It is the *disposition* to offend which the Law condemns: and hence there may be a universal opposition to the Law and a determined rebellion against the Lawgiver himself *in the heart*, where the *conduct* is morally decent and decorous. "A breaker of the Law," therefore, may every child of Adam be denominated. "The righteousness of the Law" we have lost—totally and for ever *in ourselves*—as a ground of preference and glory. The "God, I thank thee" of the Pharisee, we must therefore totally disclaim. "In many things we offend all." We are conceived in iniquity and born in sin: sin is the element in which we naturally move and have our being; we love it: we endeavour to lessen its enormity: we make it venial and tolerable: the holy, just, and righteous Law of our dread Sovereign we accommodate to our prejudiced and depraved opinions: we justify ourselves and despise others: we say not "*Tamar is more righteous than I*," but, "*God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are*:" all which evidently tends to shew our *real character*. We inherit only our father's *degeneracy*: their *regeneracy* they enjoyed only for themselves. To our original depravity we have added actual transgression; and making *the Law of God*—NOT *our own partial opinion*, or *the fallible judgment of our fellow-creatures*—the test of our character, we shall find it, doubtless, really to be that of 'miserable sinners.'

And what, as such, is our *just desert*? This, too, we

were to learn from the transgression of the Law. And in this particular the world is no less mistaken than it is respecting our character and state before God. "The world will love its own." It cannot, therefore, be expected severely to censure those whose worldliness is apparent in every thought and action of their lives. But our Bible says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." And again, "The wages of sin is death." And in accordance with the Bible our Church says, "The fault and corruption of the nature of every man deserveth God's wrath and damnation." This, indeed, is said of *Original Sin*: but, with equal propriety, we conceive, it may be said of *actual sin*: for "*Cursed*," it is declared, "*is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.*" Here is the thunder of Sinai rolling over our affrighted consciences. Who, of us all, *hath* kept the commandments written in the book of the Law? Who *does* keep them? Who, by any power or ability in himself, *can* keep them? And if the desert of one sin be death—what must be the desert of multiplied and innumerable transgressions? Oh! who would not be interested in "*the Law of the Spirit of Life*,"—*that* Law which "frees us from the Law of sin and death?" We have a Law-fulfiller—even Jesus. Through his obedience unto death, mercy beams through all the terrors of Sinai upon the regenerate and believing sinner. Well, however, is it for us to see our desert, in order that we may the more gratefully appreciate our deliverance from it. A view of what we *are in ourselves*, will tend to show us what we *were once in Adam*, and what we *may yet be in Christ*. In the Seed promised to the woman; in the lamb that Abel offered; in the virtual sacrifice of Isaac; in all the ordinances of the Jewish Church; in every sacrificial

fire that blazed ; and by every victim therein consumed, we see at once the justice of an offended God, the unyielding requirements of His righteous Law, the shadow of a greater and a more effectual offering, and the meritorious means of a full and everlasting recovery from all the consequences of our destructive fall. While, then, our consideration of *The Law* and of *The Transgression of it*, constrains us, as depraved and needy creatures, individually to cry, “ God, be merciful to *me* a sinner ; ”—let the Law do for us what the Baptist did for the multitudes of Judea—point us to our Lord and Saviour—cheer our humble, contrite spirits with the words, “ *Behold the LAMB OF GOD, which taketh away the sins of the World !* ”—and encourage us to hope that the Law we have so fearfully transgressed shall yet again be rewritten in all its eternal excellency on our hearts, and that we ourselves shall yet stand once more and for ever “ perfect and complete in all the will of God.”

SERMON II.

ON JUSTIFICATION.

JOB XXV. 4.

How then can Man be justified with God?

How a Man can be justified with God, is, perhaps, of all others, the most important enquiry that can occupy our attention. Some things we may be safely ignorant of or mistaken about: but ignorance or mistake about the matter of our justification with God, will prove ruinous to the peace and safety of our souls. And yet how lamentably ignorant, how lamentably mistaken, are many people about it! and *that* not only where the truth lies buried beneath the rubbish of Popish, Mahomedan, or Heathen error, but in a country calling itself Protestant, and where the pure Word of Christ is preached and His Sacraments are duly administered. It is utterly useless for Ministers of Religion to suppose their people to be well or generally acquainted with the manner of our acceptance with God. A very little observation will prove the contrary. All persons, indeed, will seem to understand how they can be saved; but it will be found, few do know in reality. What, then, is

our duty? Our duty is to shew you, as easily and simply as words will allow us—“*How a man can be justified with God.*” And to bring the subject of Justification fully before you, I shall say

I. What Justification is :

II. How a Man cannot be justified :

III. How alone he can be justified :

And IV. Why he can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified.

I am to say

I. *What* JUSTIFICATION is—

Justification is—the being accounted righteous though we are not so. We are depraved and sinful creatures. Naturally and practically, we are such. “The heart is wicked,” and since “out of the heart are the issues of life,” the streams must necessarily share the impurity of their source. And however dissimilar we may be one from another in sentiment, taste, and habit, “the nature of every man born into the world” is radically corrupt. “There is (in this particular) no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” But, when brought into a justified state, we are treated as if we were altogether righteous. God “sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel.” Our “sins and our iniquities He remembers no more.” In the pure eye of infinite Holiness itself we appear “without spot.” The Church collectively will the Redeemer of sinners “present to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but altogether holy and without blemish.” Cleansed and purified, the Church, “as a chaste Virgin,” will be united unto her Lord in the bonds of an everlasting union. “To her it will be granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and

white : for the fine linen is *the righteousness* of saints." And whose is this righteousness ? From whom or whence is it derived ? Not surely from ourselves or any remaining excellence in Human Nature : for "*all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,*" and by our own confession, "*there is no health in us.*" We must, therefore, be accounted righteous, and justified with God, by other merits than our own. Now to make this the more simple, and easier to be understood, let us suppose a person to be suspected of some criminal deed : he is apprehended and lodged in jail : at a time appointed, he is brought to the bar and arraigned : he is charged with the offence ; the trial proceeds ; evidence is heard ; the case is closed :—If the prisoner be proved innocent of the charge laid against him, we should say, he was acquitted or justified from it :—if, on the contrary, he be found guilty and condemned for it, he is remanded to his prison, and there, with fearful expectation, he must await the execution of the sentence. In the mean time, some powerful and benevolent individual intercedes for him with his Prince : "*bowels of compassion*" are moved for him : a pardon is procured ; the guilty criminal is forgiven ; his forfeited liberty and life are restored. Now, though guilty, he would be treated as not guilty, and if his *Prince* forgave him, no one might dare to punish him. Believing the tidings of his free forgiveness, joy would take the place of sorrow in his heart. A grateful sense of his Deliverer's mercy would pervade his mind. A new impulse might be given to his moral feelings, and this once lost and guilty criminal might become an honourable and a useful member of society—and *that*, observe, *not* through any worthiness in himself,—for in himself there was all that was obnoxious to justice ;—but merely through the clemency of his Prince and the voluntary interference of his friend.

Apply this to the point we are discussing : We need not *suppose* ourselves to be criminals ; we *really* are so. We have transgressed the law ; our transgression of it is sin ; sin is rebellion against the mind and will of Heaven's Eternal Majesty, and a sentence of guiltiness *hath* been passed upon us. Our own conscience acknowledges the justness of it : We are " tied and bound by the chain of our sin : " the gloomy horrors of an infernal prison might properly be assigned to us, for to die eternally we justly deserve :—but, we have a Friend—a Friend merciful and gracious, a Son dear and only beloved of his Father. He stays the uplifted arm of vengeance, intercedes with his Father for us, averts our doom, and God, for his Son's sake, pardons our sins and saves our souls. " To us is the word of this salvation sent : " We believe the joyful tidings, and now we poor " rebels " are freely forgiven all our numerous sins, and treated as if we had not sinned at all. Marvellous mercy this ! And is there any thing in us to merit it ? O no : it is to " the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ " that we are indebted for it. And do we feel under no obligation to Him ? Being " saved from wrath through Him, " do we feel no sense of gratitude kindling with sacred energy within us, and constraining us to live for him who died for us ? " Justified " and saved, shall we not glorify the Saviour-God who justifies and saves us ? Thus may we come out of our " prison-house, " rejoice in the free forgiving love of our Almighty and Eternal Lord, serve him in newness of life, and anticipate, with " assurance of hope, " the being " presented faultless before the presence of his glory " at his appearing and his kingdom.

Having said what Justification is, I come to say

II. *How a man CANNOT be justified—*

(And this I wish particularly to be observed ; because it is a fact too sure to be denied that many amongst us are either *justified*, as they think, or *expecting to be justified*, in a way the most unscriptural and delusive.)

How a man *cannot* be justified, has already partially appeared from our foregoing remarks : but I mean more particularly to say how he cannot enter into this state of acquittal and favour with God.

And, first, I say, a man cannot be justified by *repentance*. The criminal whom we supposed just now, might be very sorry for his crime ; but his sorrow for it could not expiate its guilt. In like manner, we may feel grieved for our sins ; but our grief can make no satisfaction for them. Could we shed rivers of tears, our tears would possess no virtue to wash away a single stain. Judas, from a conviction of his sinfulness, “repented,” and even “confessed” his sin : but neither his repentance nor confession availed him any thing. And doubtless, too, the fallen Angels, and those of mankind who have unhappily become their associates since they fell, bitterly lament their respective sins ; but their “lamentation and mourning and woe” come to no end. Now, ask many persons how they expect to be justified with God ? and the answer you will commonly obtain will be—“By true repentance.” So vague and unsatisfactory are the notions of the generality on the all-important topic of justification ! And what upon enquiry will the ‘true repentance’ whereby they think to get their sins forgiven and themselves saved be found ? A repentance that has *no truth* in it. It is proved to be false and defective by a willing continuance in sin, and a determined enmity to godliness. It is the *consequence* of sin rather than *sin* itself which people dread : they *fear* the consequence, but they *love* the sin. All such repentance is vain—utterly vain and worthless. But

even the repentance that *is* true, and whose fruits evidence its reality, has nothing at all to do with the matter of our justification in the sight of God. Deep and hearty soever as our penitence may be, there is no merit in it. It cannot, therefore,^a justify us. It may indeed be a preparation of the mind for the benefits of justification : it is not justification itself.

Again : A man cannot be justified by *amendment of life*. To true repentance, many add, amendment of life : ‘ *we must amend our lives and thereby atone, as far as we are able, for our former faults.*’ In transactions of a worldly kind, payment for a present purchase will not liquidate an old debt. So with our sins : no present obedience can make amends for our past transgressions. If we could, from this moment, keep the whole Law, and never break even one of the least of God’s commands again, there would remain our former sins against us. As to *our* making an atonement for them, where is the possibility of our doing so ? What have we, worthy the Divine acceptance, to offer ? If, “ *without shedding of blood, there is no remission,*” where is our Sacrifice ? If our amended life could justify us, whence shall we derive our ability to correct it ? how change the current of our natural affections and propensities ? how do that which is really and spiritually good ? If it be said, from God : true ; we answer : but, in receiving any help from him, why should we boast as though we had not received it ?^a Still it will remain true—“ *By the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified.*” They may evidence a justified state : but they do not, however pure in motive and disinterested in performance, justify us with God.

Further : A man cannot be justified by his *sincerity*. Many will say to us—‘ *We do offend : how can we help*

^a 1 Cor. iv. 7.

it? we are frail and sinful creatures: nevertheless, we are very sincere: we mean no harm; our heart is good. This is all a delusion: it is the reasoning of a heart “deceitful above all things.” ‘Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.’ There are, we know, some heathens who worship the Devil, and, no doubt, they are very sincere in the worship which they render to him: And there are, again, others who worship—some the Virgin Mary,—some their personal charms,—some their wealth,—some the phantom-pleasures of a phantom-world,—and all, we may believe, very sincerely too: but the sincerity of ignorance avails nothing to salvation. Do we not, however, it may be asked, read much of integrity, and uprightness in the Bible? Are not Abimelech, Job, and David, particularly commended for their integrity?^a Yes, but God must create the heart anew, before it can be true and gracious. And even when created anew, its sincerity only evidences its new creation, it does not produce that new creation. It cannot therefore justify us with God. Besides, however sincere, our obedience will always be imperfect. “Weighed in the balances we shall be found wanting;” and no imperfect righteousness—no obedience that falls an iota short of absolute perfection, will justify us with an infinitely holy and heart-searching God.

Finally, a man cannot be justified by *any works whatsoever of his own*. ‘We must do all we can, and as well as we can,’ is an expression often used, and this, with reference to our acceptance with God. Now our Lord says, “When ye shall have done ALL those things which are commanded you, say ye, *We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*” And surely

^a Gen. xx. 5, 6; Job. ii. 3; Ps. 78, 79.

“unprofitable servants” can have no *claim* to reward or favour, even admitting them to have done all they could do. But, who does *all* he *can* do? Do you? What! do you pray as much as you can? meditate as much as you can? hear or read God’s Word as much as you can? attend your public means as much as you can?—I believe there is not one of us all but could do much more than he does, if he were so disposed. Methinks we should rather beseech God to ‘pardon our offences’ than to ‘weigh our merits.’ Do what they may, people will find their own works “a bed shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it, and a covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it.” When Peter seemed to encourage a partial dependence, at least, on personal duties, Paul reproved him.^a Peter tacitly acknowledges his error by his silence, and does not hesitate at a subsequent period to call Paul a “beloved brother.”^b Any thing whatever that affords a ground of hope to a sinner besides the one foundation that is laid in Zion is “another foundation” and “OTHER foundation CAN no man lay, than that which is laid.” As to doing all, and as well as, we can, and supposing the merits of Christ will make up our deficiency, it is perfectly absurd, and contradictory to the whole tenor of Scripture. This we shall presently more evidently perceive. Suffice it now to repeat, a man CANNOT be justified by *repentance*; by *amendment of life*; by *sincerity*; nor by *any works whatever of his own*.

This prepares our way to say

III. *How alone he CAN be justified?*

And how? I cannot tell you in plainer or more significant language than that of our Church—“We are

^a Gal. ii. 11—16.

^b 2 Pet. iii. 15.

accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings."^a Let us mark these words; they contain, we believe, the substance of the Gospel on this point. "*We are ACCOUNTED righteous before God, ONLY for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and NOT for our own works or deservings.*" Well indeed may our pious forefathers add, "Wherefore, that we are justified *by faith ONLY is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort,*"—for here truly is that consolation which a poor self-condemned sinner feels to be delightfully suited to his necessities. But, *are* these things so? *Can* a man be justified with God by faith only through another's merit? That your confidence may stand—not in the word of man, but in the Word of God, turn with me first to Genesis xv. 6. Here we read, "Abraham believed in the Lord, and the Lord counted it to him for righteousness." The Lord promised Abraham "a Seed, in whom himself and all the families of the earth should be blessed:" That seed was Christ: and by faith in him (for our Lord tells us Abraham saw his day, and rejoiced to see it,) was Abraham accounted righteous or justified. True, James asks, "Was not Abraham, our father, justified *by works*?" Yes, before *men*; when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar at Moriah, his faith was shewn to be genuine and sincere, and before men he was manifestly a justified person. But the faith for which the Scriptures so justly celebrate Abraham was *that* he exercised twenty years before the birth of Isaac, and which faith had for its exalted object the promised Seed, belief in whom, James himself says, was "imputed to Abraham for righteousness."

^a Art. xi.

A living faith, as in Abraham's case, will always demonstrate its existence. It is impossible but it should do so : for it is the germ of holiness ; the principle of righteous action. Love begets love : affection mingled with gracious condescension, kindles reciprocal affection. When our faith realizes to our understanding and our judgment, a *Saviour* and a Saviour's sacrifice of himself for the guilty and condemned, what Isaac is there we would not sacrifice in return to him ? Shall we think *ourselves*—"our souls and bodies," too much to be presented to a *Saviour* ? Oh ! no : "all things will be possible to him that believeth." A liberated captive will not sigh for his prison-house again. A ransomed slave will never voluntarily bind himself to the oar of slavery again. A sense of mercy will never make sin a trifle, and induce a wish to sin that grace may abound. No, no : "we have not so learned Christ." Justification by faith alone is "a doctrine according to godliness." Our evil deeds do worthily deserve to be punished, and it is *only* by the comfort of God's grace we can mercifully be relieved. And that grace, bestowed where and on whom soever it will, invariably teaches us to "deny ungodliness, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."—Turn with me, too, to Job xxxiii. 15—30. Elihu speaks of a "Messenger, an interpreter, a Daysman," through whose uprightness the Lord will be gracious to a sinner, and deliver him from going down into the pit. Who sees not here "the Messenger of the Covenant," the Revealer of the Father's mind and will ? "I have found a ransom—an *atonement*," saith the Lord : and for whose justification or salvation does this avail but the believer's ? and what can give us an interest in it but faith only ?—Much in the same manner does Daniel speak, when he declares "Messiah shall be cut off, but *not for himself*." By

Jesus Christ “reconciliation is made for iniquity, and an everlasting righteousness is brought in.” And now this as an unspotted robe is “unto all and upon all them that *believe*.” Hence in Isaiah lxi. 10. Israel restored and saved, is represented as saying, “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God:”—and why this rapturous exultation?—“FOR, *He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness*, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” And whose is this splendid and spotless robe? for, we observe, it is “THE robe of righteousness,” preeminently and exclusively *the* righteousness whereby a sinner can be justified and shall glory. Paul will tell us: turn to Rom. iii. 19—22. In verse 19, all the world of mankind is declared to be guilty, or become subject to the punishment of God. “*Therefore*,” it follows in verse 20, “by the deeds of the shall no flesh be justified in God’s sight: for by the Law Law is the knowledge of sin: (and how can that justify us, which makes known to us our sinfulness and desert of judgment?) But now (verse 21) the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law (or books of Moses,) and the Prophets; even (verse 22) the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ,” and this, as we have before intimated, “unto all and upon all them that believe.” Hence it appears, the righteousness in which the believer triumphs is, “*the righteousness of God*,” that is, of Christ; (for “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself:”) and the means whereby he is interested in the finished work of his Redeemer is *faith*, *faith alone*, *faith without the deeds of the Law*, faith without any of our own works or deservings whatsoever. And this mode of justification, you observe, is witnessed

by the Law of Moses, and the writings of the Prophets, to which we may with propriety add the writings also of the Apostles. “SURELY, then, shall one say, “IN THE LORD *have I righteousness and strength ;*” yea, “IN THE LORD *shall all the Seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.*” Thus are we “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

I think, then, that our Church is abundantly warranted to inculcate the doctrine of Justification by faith alone in the merit of Jesus Christ upon her Ministers, and, through them, upon her members: nor can we teach any other method of Justification without wresting the Scriptures and invalidating our trust.

But, why, it may be asked, Why does faith alone, faith without works, justify us? Because faith is the only medium by which we can receive Christ. It is, as it were, the hand which “puts on Christ,” and which uses him as the Prophet, the Priest, the King, the All of his believing people. Did the Law require a perfect unsinning obedience? Jesus has magnified its every precept and honoured its every requirement. Was the blood of “a Lamb without blemish and without spot” needed to expiate the guilt of our transgressions? Behold that Lamb in Jesus: he was “holy, harmless, undefiled,” and freely did his blood flow forth in Gethsemane, in the Hall of Pilate, and on Mount Calvary. We, receiving cordially and believing practically, “the record which God hath given of his Son,” are justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the Law of Moses. Received and believed, the atonement of our Lord, heals the diseases of our sinful nature, cheers our sorrowing hearts, and constrains us to “do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.”

Whilst, then, a Man *cannot* be justified by his repentance, by any amendment of his outward conduct,

by a sincere though imperfect obedience to the Law, or by any works whatever of his own—he CAN be justified by faith in the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Thus God justifies us for Christ's sake, and we receive the benefit of justification by that act of the mind and understanding which we call believing. It only remains for me to say,

IV. *WHY a Man can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified.*

There are many reasons why he cannot: We shall briefly notice a few.

1.—*It is God's determination that "no flesh shall glory in his sight."* "All flesh hath corrupted His way." His Law we have daringly trampled on—his Word we have impiously cast behind us. And yet in the pride and arrogance of our unhumbled heart we would, if it were possible, merit our salvation, and have "whereof to glory" before God. This pride God is determined to abase. He therefore bestows a gratuitous, a free, Salvation. "Before honour is humility." The Gospel knows "no difference" between one person and another whilst in a natural state: it makes "no difference" between the justification of a moral man and the justification of an *immoral* man: it humbles all before it exalts any; nor does it allow even an Abraham or a Paul to say,—'This or that part of my Salvation I myself effected: the glory of it, consequently, belongs of right to me.' No: if it be asked, "Where is boasting, then?" The answer is, "It is excluded." A man cannot, therefore, be justified in any other way than the way in which he is justified.

2.—*God has determined that his SON ALONE shall be exalted in the justification of a sinner.* Not only must

“the loftiness of man be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man be made low,” but “the *Lord alone* must be exalted.” “All men must honour the Son *even as* they honour the Father;” and again it is written, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Now, if our righteousness, in the smallest imaginable measure, justified us with God, our Saviour alone and exclusively could not be exalted in our justification. “Works of righteousness which we have done,” and *not* “the mercy of God through Jesus Christ,” would save us—contradicting the very declaration of Scripture itself. God “hath given Christ for salvation to the ends of the earth.” He is *all* our salvation; and therefore must alone be exalted in it. This is another reason why a man can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified.

3.—*It is, too, God's determination to magnify his name and Word above all the philosophy and traditions of men.* “A council of peace” existed between him and his beloved Son. We are “saved and called not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” “My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure,” saith the Lord. Now, “if righteousness come by the Law,” and we be justified by our works, the purpose and grace of God will be frustrated, His counsel will be made void, and His pleasure will fail of its accomplishment. The Word of God, like its all-glorious Author, is “without variable-ness.” It is the enduring rock,—not the yielding sand. It is the only pure system of Divinity that exists. It bows not to the reason or authority of man: its decisions are final and unalterable; and when it says, “By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that, not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,”—it affords another and a powerful

reason why a man can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified.

But 4, and finally,—*It is a merciful God's gracious determination to afford grounds of the most abundant consolation to the humbled and believing sinner.* If we were justified on the plea of our own deserving, we should be continually and fearfully apprehensive of our acceptance and safety. We should never be able to ascertain *what* merit or *how much*, of ours would suffice to justify us: we should therefore be miserably uncertain about the matter of our justification with God. This is absolutely the case with papists and semi-papists: they can come to no “assurance of hope.” Whereas in “the righteousness of faith” there is an illimitable worth—an infinite sufficiency of merit. Placing then, our hope of mercy simply and entirely on Jesus crucified, “our consolations by Him abound.” “We glory even in tribulations for His sake.” “We take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, that the power of Christ may rest upon us.” “Our hope standeth sure.” A sweet persuasion grows within us that nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ. A peace that passeth understanding keeps our heart and mind. The service of the slave is lost in the liberty of the child. The Law fulfils its office as “our schoolmaster”—teaches us our need of Christ, and leads us to him; and now “being justified by faith,” we learn to “esteem *all* God's commandments concerning all things to be right;”—his ways become to us “ways of pleasantness,”—and it is the very joy of our hearts to feel that a man can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified.

I have now said, what Justification is; how a man cannot be justified; how alone he can be justified;

and why he can be justified in no other way than the way in which he is justified: In conclusion, I would only ASK,

Doth this offend you? What! doth it offend you to be stripped of the fig-leaf aprons or the 'filthy rags' of your own righteousness, and to be clothed with the garment of Salvation? Oh! yes: I know full well that the doctrine of Justification by faith alone is offensive to the proud carnality of the human mind. It is contrary to all the sensibilities of our fallen nature to "*cease* from going about to establish our *own* righteousness, and to *submit* ourselves to the righteousness of *God*." We would fain *be* something, *do* something, *deserve* something. Earthly good we would rather obtain by gift than purchase: spiritual good we would rather buy than receive gratuitously. But "*without* money and *without* price" must we receive "the riches of God's grace" if ever we would be enriched by them. "Righteousness" is a *gift* to be received from God through Jesus Christ. So also is the "eternal life" to which it entitles the receiver. Never shall we be justified with God but in the way of his own appointment. Condescend, therefore, you *must*, to accept the righteousness of your Redeemer, and to make 'his meritorious cross and passion' the single ground of your dependence, or never will you be justified at all. And should you do otherwise than readily accept what God so freely offers? Your rejection of his proffered mercy will but aggravate your guilt. Moral soever as you may be, your morality will not save you. Can *you* pretend to be holier, wiser, or better than Abel, Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, David, Paul, and innumerable others whose names are in the Book of Life? And yet these were all justified by faith in Jesus Christ.^a And to whom

^a Heb. xi.

are they now ascribing their Salvation?—to *themselves*?—Look and see Rev. v. 12, 14. Let us, then, be agreed to “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.” Let us pray him to “search our hearts” and to discover them to us. Let us say with the convicted and the humbled Job, “*I am vile* ;” and cherish a feeling of self-aborrence : then will it rejoice us to hear that our “Redeemer liveth ;” in him alone we shall glory ; his righteousness alone shall we make mention of, and when with all the redeemed of the earth we shout the “Alleluia” of the approaching Kingdom of Jesus Christ, it will be our everlasting and never wearying delight to sing—“Unto *Him* that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

SERMON III.

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED:— THEIR REWARD AND WOE.

ISAIAH iii. 10, 11.

*Say ye to the Righteous, that it shall be well with him ;
for they shall eat the fruit of their doings : Woe unto
the Wicked ! it shall be ill with him ; for the reward
of his hands shall be given him.*

“ RIGHTEOUSNESS exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” Plainly do we see this exemplified in the history of God’s once favoured people, the Jews. “ Haughty” and arrogant in *heart*, we cannot wonder that “ their *tongue* and their *doings* were against the Lord.” In just displeasure took he away “ from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff, the whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water.” Thus Sin occasioned the ruin of Jerusalem and the fall of Judah. Amidst, however, the general apostacy of the nation, there were some who feared the Lord and thought upon his name. And ever is it found that “ the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, and his ear is open unto their cry.” Whilst, then, He commissions his servant to declare “ a woe unto the Wicked,” he commands him to say unto the Righteous,

“it shall be well with him.” And since in our days, no less than in the days of Isaiah, the world of mankind is divisible only into two classes, viz. “the Righteous” and “the Wicked,” the Minister of the Christian Church may believe himself fully authorized to tell the one, “it shall be well with him,” and to say, “Woe unto the Wicked, for it shall be ill with him.”

I purpose to notice,

I. The Reward of the Righteous ;
And II. The Woe of the Wicked.

In noticing

I. *The Reward of the Righteous,*

We must, before we contemplate their reward, inquire *who are meant by the Righteous*. The Bible elsewhere tells us, “There is *none* Righteous, no, *not one*.” All our powers and faculties are represented as disordered and depraved : the *throat* is as an open sepulchre ; the *tongue* is deceitful ; asps’ poison is under the *lips* ; the *mouth* is full of cursing and bitterness ; the *feet* are swift to shed blood ; the *eyes* have not the fear of God before them ; the *mind* is alienated from him ; the *will* is not subject to his Law ; the *understanding* is darkened ; and—in few words, “The *whole* head is sick, and the *whole* heart is faint,” and “there is, from the sole of the foot even unto the head, no soundness in us.” Even the Apostles themselves were not exempt from this general corruption of nature. Paul, be it observed, in Eph. ii. 3. calls himself and his fellow-labourers in the Gospel, “by *nature*, children of wrath, even as others.” Now, then, what makes the difference sometimes perceptible between members of the same family or of the same community ? A difference there assuredly exists : both Scripture and observation prove it.

But whence does it arise? How do any individuals become righteous? See in the chapter we have just referred to :—viz. Eph. ii. ; you will remark that any change whatever that is wrought in us, and whereby we are made to differ from our fellow-men, is to be traced to “the great love wherewith God hath loved us.” “Quickened” from a death in sin, and brought up from the grave of his natural corruption, the new-born man will look to Jesus Christ for all his salvation. Unto “such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things,” (I use here the language of our Church, Art. xvii.) “Christ is made of God—*righteousness*.” He is “the *Second Adam* :” and in what respect is he so? Why, as all men were represented in the first, and consequently fell in their Father’s fall, and became liable to the effects of his transgression ; so are all believers represented in the Lord Jesus Christ, the *Second Adam*, and consequently are and will be interested in the benefits of his obedience and death. After the Holy Spirit, by his effectual operation on the mind, has convinced any one of sin, humbled his heart, and won his affections to Christ, that man is “accounted righteous”—“righteousness is imputed unto him also,” as it was unto faithful Abraham.^a And “as a refiner’s fire” will the Holy Spirit gradually exalt and purify all those powers and faculties of the now justified sinner that were once prostituted to the debasing service of the flesh, the world, and Satan. This is that “translation from the power of darkness into the kingdom (the *gracious* kingdom) of God’s dear Son,” which, whosoever may be the subject of it, we may with scriptural propriety denominate—“the *Righteous* man.”

^a Rom. iv. 23, 24.

And now we are prepared to notice his *Reward*. “Say ye to the Righteous, *it shall be well with him : for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.*” Faith in the Gospel, and a conversation according to the Gospel’s pure and hallowing doctrines, does insure most certainly a reward to the Righteous. We cannot, indeed, imagine that an infinitely glorious Creator can ever become indebted to a creature, or obligated to reward a creature’s faith and service : nevertheless, there is a “reward of *grace*,” though not of debt. God ‘favourably alloweth,’ mercifully accepts, and will graciously reward the obedience of his servants. “*In keeping his commands there is a great reward ;*” a satisfaction, a peace, a joy, in the ways of the Lord, unspeakably precious and delightful. “*Verily, then, there is a reward for the righteous :*” “*It shall be WELL with him ;*”—and *well with him in life,—in death,—and in eternity.*

It shall be well with him *in life*. Is he young ? Is he another Samuel, Josiah, or Timothy ? Is he another child crying in the Temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David ?” He shall, in the Spirit of adoption, and through a Saviour’s mediation, cry unto the sovereign and eternal God—“*My Father, thou art the guide of my youth.*”—Is he engaged in the necessary cares and businesses of the world ? He shall be “kept in the hour of temptation” that shall try the stability of others, and “prove every man’s work of what sort it is.”—Is he “small and of no reputation ?” Angels shall minister unto him.—Is he poor ? “God hath chosen the poor of this world :” riches of grace below, and riches of glory in reversion, far outweigh in excellence and value every earthly good whatever.—Is he ‘in sorrow, need, pain, sickness, or any other adversity ?’ “The high and lofty One” will “make for him all his bed in his sickness ;” bow down a listening ear

to “the sorrowful sighing” of his servant; “be with him in trouble,” and ultimately “wipe away all tears from his eyes.”—Is *he*, as was his holy Lord, “despised and rejected of men?” Is his “good conversation in Christ” falsely accused? Do the wicked deem him—his name, his character, and that on account of his piety—their lawful “prey?”^a “The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon him:” the sufferer’s cross becomes a pledge of the conqueror’s crown.—Is he aged? Does he tremble beneath the weight of numerous years? “Even to hoar hairs will I carry you,” saith the Lord: and “the hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness.” In *life*, and in all life’s various seasons, circumstances, weaknesses, and ills, the righteous man shall prove that “godliness is profitable unto all things,” and “hath hope of *the life that now is*” no less certainly than “of *that* which is to come.”

It shall be well with him also *in Death*. That which to Nature is commonly terrible and affrighting, is to the regenerate man—if not *always* desirable, at least, often so, and *never* otherwise than safe and happy. “It is gain to die.” “To depart and to be with Christ, is far better” than to sojourn where we can only gaze upon a Saviour’s glory through darkening mediums. Brethren, come with me to the chamber of a dying Saint. All is sweetly solemn. Stillness prevails—or is broken only by ejaculatory prayer and whispered praise. Draw nigh the sick man’s bed. What see we here? “The *Death* of the Righteous.” Calmness, serenity, humble but triumphant hope, are depicted on the now colourless countenance. Hark! a softened breath declares,—“*It is well: all is well!*” See, the upraised eyes still continue to speak. They seem with beseeching earnestness to say, “Come, Lord

^a Is. lix. 15.

Jesus: Make haste, my Beloved; and be as the roe or the young hart upon the mountains of division!" Death approaches: the scarcely beating pulse stands still: a momentary pause, and the struggles of Death are passed. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright; for *the end* of THAT man is peace." Was it his *own* perfection or uprightness that thus sustained him? Oh! no: it was a consciousness of the Saviour's presence, an assured persuasion of Christ's all-sufficiency, a firm belief in the finished work of redeeming Mercy, and a sincere desire that the Lord should be glorified in him, "whether by life or by death." Thus, even "*in the Earth* is the Righteous recompensed," and truly "hath he *hope* in his Death." And shall his hope perish with his earthly being? No: for,

It shall be well with him *in Eternity*: and *how* well it shall be with the righteous man in eternity, "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath heart of man (amidst the millions of its imaginings) conceived." One, indeed, was once "caught up into Paradise;" but it was not possible or lawful for him to depict the scene in the language of mortality. Who then, of us, may dare attempt to describe the glories of the eternal world? O, ye Intelligences, ye Angels, ye Spirits of the just made perfect, what are your wondrous joys, your ecstatic pleasures, your unwearying occupations? Beloved, we must die and rise again to realize all the glory that shall be revealed in the servants of God. Suffice it for us now to know that the blessedness of a man justified by faith and saved by grace, will be commensurate—not with *his*, but—with his Redeemer's worthiness, and with those capacities to receive and to enjoy which the Spirit of Christ has awakened, exercised, renewed, and purified. With a mind previously 'drawn up to high and heavenly things'—with

“senses” previously “exercised to discern both good and evil,” the righteous man will be prepared in the resurrection for the kingdom preparing for him, and therein shall he “be filled with all the fulness of God.” What though he was “cut down as the grass, and faded as a flower of the field?” It was only to be formed anew, and then to be planted in a kindlier clime, to bloom more beautifully. What, though he was taken away amidst the smiles and caresses of many who loved him here? He merely lost those smiles for others that will beam with everlasting brightness on him there. It was well with him here; it shall be better with him now. Now he truly “eats the fruits of his doings,”—and these fruits are precious and eternal. Whatever he did from a principle of faith and love, God will in no wise forget to acknowledge and to reward. He worked the work, without which all other works are vain.^a He sowed to the Spirit, and now “of the Spirit he reaps life everlasting.” He “sorrowed after a godly sort;” “believed with the heart unto righteousness;” and “brought forth fruit with patience.” It is now, therefore, WELL with him, and shall be well with him *for ever*.

Such is the Reward of the Righteous. We come to notice,

II. *The Woe of the Wicked.*

And, as before we enquired—Who were meant by the righteous? so here we must ask, Whom are we to understand by *the wicked*? But is this question necessary? Yes; and not *less* necessary, we believe, than it was to enquire concerning its opposite character. For although, in a general way, people allow themselves to be sinners, yet even whilst making this admission, there is evidently no consciousness of sin, no apprehension of

^a John vi. 28, 29.

its adequate desert, no sorrow for it, no hatred to it, no concern to know how, consistently with the attributes of a God "glorious in holiness," sin may be pardoned and remitted. 'We are all sinners,' is the acknowledgment of the lips: but, 'we are not so bad as others,' is the secret sentiment of the heart. If, however, none but practical believers of "the truth as it is in Jesus" are either accounted righteous or are really so, it follows necessarily that all beside them must be wicked. Let not our plainness of speech be condemned. We mean to prove what we assert. Our Church says, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, *by his own natural strength or good works*, to faith and calling upon God."^a And again, "Works done *before* the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasing to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; *and we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.*"^b And further, "Good works are *the FRUITS of faith, and FOLLOW AFTER justification:*" and "though they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment, yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and *do spring out NECESSARILY of a true and living faith, &c.*"^c If so (and shall we gainsay our accredited formularies?) *if so*, what becomes of the assumed Dignity of Human Nature, the boasted rationality and the moral excellence of the human kind? No man, by any power or ability in himself, can turn himself to God: No works done *before* the grace and Spirit of the Redeemer are imparted, are pleasing to God: any thing that makes us to differ either from our former selves, or the generality of our fellow-sinners, is the *fruit* of faith, and *subsequent* upon our justification. Then it follows, as a necessary con-

^a Art. x.^b Art. xiii.^c Art. xii.

sequence, that where the grace and spirit of Christ are wanting—where there is no justifying faith and corresponding works, there is the character of the Wicked. But, will the *Bible* warrant our conclusion? Saith the *Scripture* this? For, however we may venerate the formularies of our Church, the *Word of God* must be the paramount standard of our orthodoxy, and the sole rule of our judgment. Now, in that Word I find it written, “*Without ME ye can do nothing!*” What, then, are those who pretend to do every thing without a divine Redeemer, and a vicarious sacrifice? Will *the righteous* despise and reject him? Will *they* cry “Away with him,” and refuse to be obligated to his merit *alone* for salvation?—I find it said, moreover, “*Without FAITH it is impossible to please God.*” “All men have not faith:” those who are destitute of it cannot please God: must they not, then, *displease* Him; and are not those who displease God, *the wicked*?—Again I read, “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ.” Is it not here *implied* that as surely as there is “no condemnation to them that are in Christ,” there is condemnation to them that are *not* in him? And who are they that are not in him? Them that “walk after the flesh” and “not after the spirit,”—in other words,—*the wicked*.—And on whom is that “woe” pronounced we find recorded in Luke xi. 37—44? On persons who appeared “beautiful outwardly:” “their works however they did to be seen of men:” they went “about to establish their *own* righteousness:” their heart was void of grace, faith, truth, and love; and therefore He who knew what was in man, pronounced a “woe unto” them. Would Jesus Christ say, Woe unto you, ye *Righteous*?—But, finally,—as if to prevent the possibility of mistake relative to the character of the wicked, we read, in Ps. ix. 17, “*The*

wicked shall be turned into Hell ;" and who they are the same Scripture declares, namely, they are a "*people that forget God.*" How common is forgetfulness of God ! How willingly do many persons forget Him ! Amidst the multitude of their thoughts, God is not among them all—or if he be recollected, he is viewed only as an object of terror and aversion. Does not this argue a heart "*deceitful above all things and desperately WICKED ?*" And may not a minister of Religion most truly aver that a man may be sober, quiet, industrious ; may (as it is almost universally said) pay all their due ; say his prayers ; keep his church, and be, in worldly estimation, a good sort of person ; and *yet, YET*, in the judgment of God, and by the decision of the Bible, be a *wicked* man ? Judge ye, Beloved. Let us learn to distinguish between things. Be it remembered that a man may be *comparatively* and even *morally* good, without being *really* and *spiritually* so.

Having ascertained who *the wicked* are, we come to notice now their *Woe*. "*Woe to the Wicked : it shall be ill with him, and the reward of his hands shall be given him.*" Here the woe of the wicked is called their "*reward ;*" and a reward it is : for while "*eternal life*" is bestowed as a "*gift through Jesus Christ,*" upon the Righteous, the "*woe*" of the Wicked is paid to them as "*wages*" earned.^a "*I will reward them that hate me,*" saith the Lord.^b And again, "*I will reward them their doings.*"^c Truly, then, may we say, the self-complacent ; the lover of human praise ; the mere negatively good but really wicked man, hath his reward. (See Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16.) But, ah ! how all-unlike is it to the Reward of the Righteous ! "*Say ye to the Righteous it shall be well with him : Woe to*

^a Rom. vi. 23.^b Deut. xxxii. 41.^c Hos. iv. 9.

the Wicked, it shall be *ill* with him !” And as with the one it will be well in life, in death, and in eternity, so with the other it shall be ill *in life, in death, and for ever*.

It shall be ill with the Wicked *in life*. The Wicked may, as the Scripture says, “bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, *though* I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst ;” but “the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this Book shall lie upon him.” Others may lull his slumbers in the security that deceives him, “saying, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace.” He may tell you of the goodness of his heart, and point you to the World’s universal approval of his conduct : but he forgets the “woe” annexed to “*all* men’s speaking well of us.” Riches, honours, friends, the wicked man may possess : his path-way to human view may seem strewn with enjoyments : smiles on every side may greet him ; the joys and the sorrows of a multitude may be dependent on his notice or neglect, and yet “in the fulness of his sufficiency, he shall be in straits :” a worm shall gnaw the root of his gourd, and the faithlessness of his heart in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be to him as the withering blast, sweeping over all his pleasures. Is he young ? He has but the more time to “treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.”—Is he engaged in business ? Is he prospered in it ? Doth he begin to “pull down his barns,” and to build other and larger storehouses for his “goods ?” Still it is written, “Woe to him that gaineth an evil gain !” “The wealth of the sinner” shall ultimately be found to be “laid up for the just.”—Do distress and anguish come upon him ? The world forsakes its votary in the hour of need and trial.—Does a sense of guiltiness

sometimes harass him? He knows not the Gilead where a Saviour may be found, and that dying love whereby a sinner's sorrows may be healed.—Is he aged? No lengthened life of faith, no gracious riches, no spiritual honours has he attained. But, does he, in the proud ignorance of the carnal mind, 'pray (as many a one will say) to be delivered;' adding too, 'I have made my peace with God!' Awful delusion this! "There is no *peace*, saith my God, to the Wicked"—no *peace*, save only through the meritorious Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ. In fine, the *life* of the Wicked is one "woeful day," nor is there a period of it, however marked either by prosperous or adverse circumstances, wherein it is not "ill" with him.

And can it be otherwise in death? No: it shall be ill with the wicked *in death*. 'I am not afraid to die,' says many a careless man: 'I heartily wish you were so,' is the mental answer of the pious Minister. The stupid insensibility of the unhumbled unawakened sinner, even Death itself can scarcely appal. The same self-delusion prevails in the expiring moments as marked the days of life and vigour. There is no prostration of the soul before the infinitely holy God. There is no submission to the righteousness of the all-glorious Redeemer. There is no "joy in the Holy Ghost," or transformation by the Spirit's power from "glory into glory." No, none of these things characterize the dying of a sinner. Brethren, come and see. You went with me just now to the chamber of the dying saint; come with me now to the chamber of the dying sinner.—This is indeed "the house of mourning." Unclose the darkened window: admit the light. Ah! it falls upon a soul beclouded with ignorance, unbelief, and sin. Approach the sick man's bed. 'Is it *well* with thee, brother?' 'I hope so.' 'Where does your hope

rest ?' 'I do not know.' Shall we tell him he has done no harm, and been very good ? "Miserable comforters" should we be. But, see, the chills of death increase : the immortal soul is required ; and where, O where, is the justifying grace whereby alone a sinner can appear "faultless before the throne of God ?" The groan of expiration ceases ; motionless becomes the quivering lip—"Man giveth up the ghost, and where is he ?" Ah ! *WHERE is he ? Here* lies the body, the fallen wreck of sin, and soon to return to its original dust again, but *WHERE is he ? where* is the man's imperishable part ? *where* the unrenewed and unforgiven spirit ?

"How shocking must thy summons be, O Death !

To him that is at ease in his possessions ;

Who, counting on long years of pleasure here,

Is quite unfurnished for that world to come !—

In that dread moment, how the frantic soul

Raves round the walls of her clay tenement,

Runs to each avenue and shrieks for help,

But shrieks in vain. How wishfully she looks

On all she's leaving, now no longer her's !

A little longer, yet a little longer,

O might she stay to wash away her stains

And fit her for her passage. Mournful sight !

Her very eyes weep blood, and every groan

She heaves is big with horror ; but the foe,

Like a staunch murd'rer, steady to his purpose,

Pursues her close thro' ev'ry lane of life,

Nor misses once the track, but presses on ;

Till, forc'd at length to the tremendous verge,

At once she sinks to everlasting ruin."

Yes, "to *everlasting* ruin ;" for while the righteous shall enter life eternal, the wicked shall go away into *everlasting* punishment. And if such be the declaration of the supreme and unerring Judge of all, does it become me to hesitate, or shall I be thought uncharitable, in saying,

It shall be ill with the wicked *for ever*? With no title to life, he must “die the death.” With no meetness for the inheritance of the saints, he must away to the portion of the lost. If “their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched,” he must live for ever to endure their horrors. “There is no repentance in the grave;” there is no Saviour in Hell. Read the xvth chapter of St. Luke. The rich man was, perhaps, in human view, what many an one is called now—‘a good sort of man.’ We do not read that he was profane, unjust, or immoral; but “he died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” Between him and the once despised but pious Lazarus “a great” and impassable “gulf was fixed.” An unalterable and irreversible “CANNOT” seals the state of the one in glory and of the other in misery:—neither could pass to the other. The Popish notion of a purgatory is no doctrine of the Bible. It is the lie of a “cunning craftiness;” nor can “the Man of Sin,” with all his pretended power, circumscribe the “*everlasting* punishment” of a wicked man by periods of a hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand years. No: Heaven is, and will be, the everlasting abode of the righteous; Hell is, and will be, the everlasting dwelling-place of the wicked. It was bad with him here; it will be worse with him there. And what though the wicked man lived respectably, and acted wisely, and laboured diligently, and fared sumptuously, and got him much of this world’s honour and renown?—Where is he now? In eternity. And how fares he there? He is receiving “the reward of his hands.” And what is that reward?—*Think* you what it is, and spare me the pain of *telling* you. “Woe” in all its tremendous verity is poured upon him. No righteousness of faith shields him from the sword of justice. No message of mercy can be despised

now—no Saviour is “set forth crucified” before him—no Spirit strives with the rebellious sinner there. There the “corruption” which springs from “sowing to the flesh” is reaped. “The reward” of a sinner’s *own* hands is bestowed upon him ; his *OWN* hands, observe : for “God hath not appointed us to wrath,” nor do we read that the “fire unquenchable” was prepared for *man*. No ; if any man be “a vessel of wrath,” he hath “fitted *himself* for destruction.” (See the *Greek* of Rom. ix. 22.) It is “ill with him” simply on account of his own depravity and sinfulness. “*God is love :*” He saves “*by grace through faith :*” *unbelief* in Jesus is the world’s condemning sin : and however “exceedingly great” may be “the plague” of the wicked, they will amidst all their miseries be constrained to acknowledge, “*Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, that thou hast judged thus :*” and the redeemed shall add, “*Even so, Lord God Almighty ; true and righteous are thy judgments.*”

Such, then, is both the Reward of the Righteous, and the Woe of the Wicked. It remains for me only to ADDRESS a few words,

1. To the Righteous.

You will perceive that I do not use the term “Righteous” as a mere complimentary appellation, or as if I thought it possible for any one to be perfect whilst sojourning in “a body of sin and death.” No : “there is not a just (that is, a justified) man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not,” and you yourselves, I am persuaded, would rather say the “God be merciful” of the publican, than the “God I thank thee” of the pharisee. But yet *as righteous* I address you, because “ye are perfect through the comeliness” which the Lord God hath put upon you. Well, then,

while your "*clothing* is of wrought gold," you should aspire to be "all-glorious *within*." Christ is made of God unto us—*sanctification* no less than righteousness and redemption. Whom he justifies, them he also sanctifies. Then seek the benefits of your justification. See these benefits enumerated in Rom. v. 1—5. Pray ye that you may experience and enjoy them. If you love your Redeemer, "keep his sayings." Let your faith be seen in the nature, the quality, and the abundance of your works. Be it your delight to "sit still at the Master's feet." Learn "his *doctrine*," that you may "do his *will*." Pant after "the joy of faith." The religion of many hardly gets beyond doubts and fears: seek *ye* its rewards, its comforts, its triumphs. When the inquiry is made, "Is it well with thee?" be prepared to answer as undauntedly as the Shunammite answered, "*It is well*." Consider Christ; study Him, and be followers of Him with all the accuracy and exactness possible. So shall your "reward be great:" in life, in death, and in eternity, it shall be well with you: "joy and peace in believing" shall be your portion now, and the presence, the approval, the resurrection-glory, and the immortality of your Redeemer, shall you inherit for ever hereafter.

2. To the Wicked,

I say, you need not be liars, swearers, sabbath-breakers, adulterers, and the like, to be wicked men. The world may have "no *evil* thing to say of you," and yet your *heart* may not be right with God. But, if you have no claim to the decencies of moral conduct, if you love sin and live in it, why, then may you most certainly conclude that it is ill with you. "A tree is known by its fruits," and if its fruits be corrupt, the tree must also itself be corrupt, and unless its nature can be renewed,

it will be found fit only for the fire. And is there no wish within you to be changed? Would you rather it should continue ill with you? There is an awful and unfathomable reality in the "woe" impending over you. "Why will ye die?" Here is a fountain for your uncleanness, a robe for your nakedness, a mercy-seat for your cries and prayers: "Why, then, will ye die?" Oh! "turn you at my reproof; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." Nothing is too hard for the Lord. Take with you words and say, "Turn *thou* me, and I shall be turned." Despair not. Of the once idolatrous, adulterous, covetous Corinthians, it was said, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Still by "faith in this name," and "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," may other poor, guilty, and polluted sinners, be justified, sanctified, and saved. Then flee ye to "the hope" here set before you. Seek to realize with your "form" the "*power of godliness.*" Tremble at that word in Isaiah v. 21. "Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own conceits!" It is ill with you whilst you are proud and self-sufficient. To Christ *every* knee must bow, and *every* tongue confess. Oh! that ye may become his "willing people" now in the day of His gracious power: for says He that "lifteth up His hand to Heaven and saith, I live for ever; If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I *will* render vengeance to mine enemies and *will* reward them that hate me."^a

Now to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, the great Rewarder of Righteousness, and the sovereign Avenger of Wickedness, be glory, dominion, praise, and power, for ever and ever. Amen.

^a Deut. xxxii. 41.

SERMON IV.

AN APPEAL TO THE HOMILIES OF THE CHURCH.

1 SAMUEL xvi. 7.

The Lord seeth not as Man seeth : for Man looketh on the outward appearance ; but the Lord looketh on the heart.

WHEN enlightened and spiritually-minded Ministers discriminate between motive and action, heart and life, God's judgment of human character and Man's ; it not unfrequently excites surprise and provokes disdain. We are thought to be "setters forth of *strange* doctrines"—doctrines new, peculiar, and unnecessary. We appeal almost in vain to the Scriptures for the truth of our declarations—they we are said to wrest. In vain also do we point to the renovated heart and holy conduct of our people, as evidencing the beneficial effect of our ministrations—our people are represented to be arrogant, presumptuous, or needlessly particular. Now, in such a case, it is pleasing and consoling to be enabled to refer the congregations committed to our charge to the acknowledged Writings of the Martyrs, Confessors,

and Reformers of the English Church.* Truth suffers nothing by the lapse of time: it is, like its Author, “yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same.” If, therefore, Latimer, Ridley, Cranmer, Hooker, and others, taught and preached the Truth as it is in Jesus, and our sentiments be found strictly to accord with theirs, shall our doctrines be thought new, strange, peculiar, and unnecessary? Whether our sentiments do so strictly accord with theirs, you yourselves, my Brethren, shall be the judges. Referring you to the Homilies of our Church, I purpose from them, FIRST, *To gather a brief summary of Christian Doctrine*; and SECONDLY, *To draw some obvious Inferences from it*.

I. In our *Summary of Christian Doctrine*—

We will briefly state, in succession, what we conceive to be the great and essential truths of Christianity, gathering as we proceed some corresponding sentences from the Homilies.

And, first, we believe man to be a totally depraved and sinful creature—*quam longissimè*, as far as possible, gone from original righteousness.

“We have neither faith, charity, hope, patience, chastity, nor any thing else that good is, but of God: and, therefore, those virtues be called *the fruits of the Holy Ghost*, and not the fruits of Man. Let us then acknowledge ourselves before God (as indeed we be) miserable and wretched sinners.” “In ourselves, as of ourselves, we find *nothing* whereby we may be delivered from our miserable captivity, into which we were cast,

* The Author feels happy in recommending these excellent and valuable Writings to his reader. Though sometimes quaint in expression, they will well repay attentive perusal. The two books of Homilies may be procured for a few shillings of the Prayer-Book and Homily Society, Exeter Hall, London.—They are bound in one Volume.

through the envy of the Devil, by breaking of God's commandment in our first parent Adam." Again, "of ourselves, and by ourselves, we are not able either to think a good thought or to work a good deed; so that we can find in ourselves *no* hope of Salvation, but rather whatsoever maketh to our destruction."^a Can words say plainer that "Man's nature is wholly perverse and corrupt with sin?"

Consequent upon this will be our *utter hopelessness and helplessness*, in ourselves. If "Israel hath destroyed himself," his hope and help must be found elsewhere than in himself.

"We are all become unclean, but we all are *not able* to cleanse ourselves, nor to make one another of us clean. We are all by nature the children of God's wrath; but we are *not able* to make ourselves the children and inheritors of God's glory. We are sheep that run astray: but we *cannot of our own power* come again to the sheep-fold,—so great is our imperfection and weakness." "In ourselves, therefore, may not we glory, which, of ourselves are *nothing* but sinful."^b

Spiritual Influence, hence becomes absolutely necessary to regenerate the heart and to convert the soul.

"As there are three several and sundry Persons in the Deity; so have they three several and sundry offices proper unto each of them: the Father to create; the Son to redeem; *the Holy Ghost to sanctify and regenerate.*" "Where the Holy Ghost worketh, there nothing is impossible, as may appear by the inward regeneration and sanctification of Mankind." "The Holy Ghost is the worker of our sanctification, and maketh us new men in Christ Jesus."^c "And in read-

^a Homily on the misery of mankind.

^b Ibid.

^c Homily for Whitsunday.

ing God's Holy Word, he not always most profiteth that is most ready in turning of the Book, or saying of it without the Book; but he that is most turned into it, that is most *inspired by the Holy Ghost*, most in his heart and life altered and changed by that thing which he readeth." "And in another place Chrysostom saith, that man's human and worldly wisdom or science is not needful to the understanding of Scripture, but *the revelation of the Holy Ghost*, who inspireth the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence do search therefore."^a Let these words be observed, and read in the recollection of *their* statements who condemn the person and work of the Spirit.

Man being a fallen helpless dependant creature, cannot, we affirm, *merit* any part whatever of his salvation. "Because all men be sinners and offenders against God, and breakers of his Law and Commandments, therefore can no man by his *own* acts, works, and deeds, (seem they never so good) be justified and made righteous before God." "Let us all confess with mouth and heart that we be full of imperfections: let us know our own works of what imperfection they be; and then we shall not stand foolishly and arrogantly in our own conceits, nor challenge *any* part of justification by our merits or works."^b Our desert of nothing—but "*God's wrath and damnation*," is universally apparent in the Homilies.

Man must, therefore, be justified and saved *gratuitously*. "Every man of necessity is constrained to seek for *another* righteousness or justification, to be received at God's own hands." "This justification or righteousness which we so receive of God's mercy and Christ's merits, *embraced by faith*, is taken, ac-

^a Exhortation to reading the SS. ^b Hom. on the misery of mankind.

cepted, and allowed of God, for our perfect and full justification." God sent his Son to *fulfil the Law for us*, and, by shedding of his most precious blood, to make a sacrifice and satisfaction or (as it may be called) amends to his Father for our sins." "God is beneficial to us *without* our merits or deserts, of his *own mere mercy* and tender goodness, for Christ's sake." "Justification is not the office of man, but of God." "He provided a *ransom* for us, that was, the most precious body and blood of his own most dear and beloved Son, who, *BESIDE this ransom, fulfilled the Law for us perfectly.*" "And so the justice of God and his mercy did embrace together and fulfilled the mystery of our redemption."^a

By faith alone do we become interested in this redemption. "Three things go together in our justification: upon God's part mercy and grace; upon Christ's part justice, that is, the satisfaction of God's justice, or the price of our redemption, by the offering of his body and the shedding of his blood, *with* fulfilling of the Law perfectly and thoroughly; and upon *our part true and lively faith* in the merits of Jesus Christ, which yet is not ours, but by God's working in us." "A true and lively faith is the gift of God, and not man's only work without God." "Not that this our *faith* in Christ, which is within us, doth justify us, or deserve our justification unto us:" For "our faith in Christ, as it were, saith unto us thus: It is not *I* that take away your sins, but it is *Christ ONLY*; to him only I send you for that purpose; forsaking therein all your good virtues, words, thoughts, and works, and only putting your trust in Christ." "This doctrine advanceth and setteth forth the true glory of Christ, and beateth down the vain glory

^a Hom. on Salvation.

of man ;” and “ this doctrine whosoever denieth is not to be accounted for a *Christian* man.”^a Mark this. See of what importance the doctrine of Justification by faith alone in the merit of Jesus Christ was in the estimation of our Reformers.

Believers alone are in a state of acceptance and safety. “ *Christ is now the righteousness of all that TRULY do believe in him.* He for *them* paid their ransom by his death. He for *them* fulfilled the Law in his life. So that now in him and by him, every TRUE Christian man may be called a fulfiller of the Law ; forasmuch as that, which their infirmity lacketh, Christ’s justice hath supplied.”^b

And yet the completeness of believers in Christ does not supersede or make void the necessity of *personal* holiness. “ The true, lively and Christian faith, is no dead, vain, or unfruitful thing ; but a thing of perfect virtue, of wonderful operation or working, and strength, bringing forth all good motions and good works.” “ St. Augustine saith, good living cannot be separated from true faith, which worketh by love. St. Chrysostom saith, Faith of itself is full of good works ; as soon as a man believeth, he shall be garnished with them.” “ The first coming unto God is through faith, whereby we be justified, and without it no good works can be done.” “ Do not deceive yourselves, therefore, thinking that you have faith in God, or that you love God, or do trust in him, or do fear him, *when you live in sin* ; for then your ungodly and sinful life declareth the contrary, whatever you may think.” “ Be sure of your faith ;—try it by your living.”^c

The faith which is not thus operative and influential is a *dead and useless* faith. “ Faith is taken in Scrip-

^a Hom. on salvation.

^b Ibid.

^c Hom. on faith.

ture in two manner of ways : There is one faith which in Scripture is called a *dead* faith, which bringeth forth no good works, but is idle, barren, and unfruitful. And this faith, by St. James, is compared to the faith of Devils, which believe God to be true and just, and tremble for fear ; yet they do nothing well but all evil." " This dead faith therefore is not the sure and substantial faith which saveth sinners." " Those who fancy themselves to be set at liberty from all good works, and may live as they list, trifle with God, and deceive themselves, it is a manifest token that they be far from having the true and lively faith, and also far from knowledge what *true* faith meaneth."^a

Hence *no works whatever* of a man destitute of a true and lively faith are *really* or *essentially* good. " Good deeds are not measured by the facts themselves, and so discerned from vices ; but by the *ends and intents* for which they are done." " If a man clothe the naked, feed the hungry, &c., if he does not so in faith for the honour and glory of God, they be but dead, vain, and fruitless works to him." " That work which comes not of faith is nothing : where the faith of Jesus Christ, saith St. Augustine, is not the foundation, there is *no* good work, what building soever we make." " *All* the life of them that lack the true Christian faith is sin, and *nothing* is good without Him that is the Author of goodness." " Faith gives life to the soul and worth to works : and they be as much dead to God that lack faith, as they be to the world, whose bodies lack souls." " Let no man, therefore, reckon upon his good works before his faith ; whereas faith was not, good works were not."^b Be it here remembered, " the *Lord* seeth not as Man seeth : the Lord looketh on the heart."

^a Sermon on Faith.

^b Sermon of Good Works.

One other point only shall we adduce. Whilst Salvation is exclusively of grace through faith in Christ, *a Man's destruction is entirely of himself*. "Of ourselves and by ourselves, we have no goodness, help, nor salvation; but contrariwise, sin, damnation, and death everlasting." "Of ourselves cometh all evil and damnation." "The sins of our heart do defile our own selves." And, therefore, if any man perishes under the means of grace, he perishes—not because God has decreed his reprobation, for "God *willeth not* the death of a sinner"—but solely on account of the desperate wickedness, the prevailing pride, and the condemning unbelief of his own heart.

Such is the *summary of Christian doctrine* which we gather from the Writings of the Fathers of our Church. These are the great and essential Doctrines which we teach. If they were necessary in the ministrations of our Reformers, they cannot be unnecessary in ours. If they were "doctrines according to godliness" at *any* time, they must be so still. If they were true once, they must be true now. Truth, we have said, is unalterable. Human nature improves not by generation; man must, therefore, in all ages need a free and unmerited salvation. From the first transgressor that was saved, to the last that shall be saved, all must be saved alike. "No man cometh unto the Father but by Jesus Christ." "No man can call Jesus, 'Lord,' but by the Holy Ghost." "WITHOUT faith it is impossible to please God." "Faith worketh by love," and "faith WITHOUT works is dead." And "if any man entereth not into the eternal rest which remains for the people of God, it is BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF." Saith not our Church the same?—Then judge ye *who* are the truest friends and most faithful servants of the Church—those who withhold, weaken, and neglect the simple peculiar-

ities of the Christian Religion, or those who humbly, constantly, and practically inculcate them.

From our foregoing Summary of Doctrine, we come

II. To draw some obvious *Inferences* :—

We infer 1. How lamentably mistaken are the generality of mankind in their judgment of themselves and of each other.

Do not people generally rest satisfied with the mere decencies of exterior conduct? Have they any idea of their state before God? Do they not rather plume themselves with excellencies that cannot possibly belong to them? Like Israel, they are “as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinances of God,” and yet need to be “shewn their transgressions and their sins.” Laodicean-like, they say, “We are rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” “Outward appearance” is the guide and rule of their judgment. The corruption of human nature—the absence of all Christian Principle—the consequent worthlessness of all works however profuse or splendid in worldly estimation—and, in fine, all the great essentials of spiritual piety, are lost sight of and deemed things of little or no value. But this is not to “judge righteous judgment.” “The Lord looketh on the heart:” He “requireth truth in the inward parts,” and nothing will our favourable opinion of ourselves or of each other avail us while we are destitute of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and unrenewed in the desires and dispositions of our minds. *Eliab* may please the eye of Samuel; but *David* is the Lord’s anointed. We may infer, therefore,

2. How indispensably necessary are the illuminating influences of the Holy Ghost.

‘In writing the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Ghost is in nothing more diligent than to pull down man’s vain glory and pride, which of all vices is most universally grafted into all Mankind.’ Never shall we cordially submit to the humiliating doctrines of our Faith, unless the Eternal Spirit discover to us their truth in the corresponding propensities of our sinful nature. Spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned: “the natural man,” consequently, cannot understand them. Hence many that arrogate to themselves membership with the Established Church, and possibly “despise others,” condemn and even ridicule those statements which are the peculiar glory and excellence of our Church. Let them, however, as St. Paul says, become “illuminated”^a and regenerated by the power and grace of the Holy Ghost, and, we can dare to say, they will see a propriety and a worth in our Doctrines, of which they have now no conception. They will see the glory of the Eternal Three; the honour of the One Redeemer; the humiliation of Man’s proud heart; the interests of true Morality; and the spiritual being and prosperity of the Church itself, all involved in them. Every thing would know its proper rank and place in the system of Christian orthodoxy. All would be harmonious in its result—and it would be seen that we deemed our ministrations efficient only just so far as they humbled the Sinner, exalted the Saviour, and promoted universal holiness of heart and character. Hence we infer,

3. How certainly Religion is an inward and a Spiritual matter. It is the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart. It consists in the exercise of faith, hope,

^a Heb. x. 32.

love, fear, and every passion and affection of the renewed man. We mean not to decry forms—they are useful and admirable in their place, and none more so, we believe, than those of our own Church: but a religion of mere form is a body without a soul. The depravity of our nature must be *felt*. We must feel ourselves helpless and weak; feel that apart from Christ we can do nothing; acknowledge cordially the justice of our condemnation in ourselves: gratefully accept what we do not deserve: believe with the heart unto righteousness: serve the Lord with gladness: receive grace to help us in our times of need (and when shall we need it not?) out of the treasured fulness of Jesus Christ: watch and pray: be ever zealously affected in a good cause, and always on the wing of cheerful duty, (like the Cherubim in the Prophet's Vision, Isa. vi. 2.) to execute the will and word of our dear Saviour. This is something above and beyond the mere formality of Religion. Principle alone can effect it. And no where will you see this experience realized but where “The Truth” is both unhesitatingly, plainly, and fully declared; and cordially embraced, believed, and practised. “The LORD looketh on the *heart*:” “the *root* of the matter” will he examine: the works of *faith* will he reward: the *believer* will he welcome to his joy, and crown with honour. The kingdom of Heaven will not be found opened unto others: do what they will, “their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands.” Whence, we infer finally, and

4. How truly must a man “be born again” ere he can see the kingdom of God.

A change so great must take place in our views, feelings, desires, every thing, that it is as if we were born

anew with new perceptions and new propensities. The love of self, of sin, and of the world must be rooted out; the love of God, of holiness, and of Heaven must reign. "All things must become new." And *this*, observe, before we can see the kingdom of God's grace in this world, or enter the brighter kingdom of his glory in the world to come. To this end is the Gospel preached: by the "incorruptible seed, which is the word of God, are we begotten again;" and when thus "renewed in the spirit of our mind," we shall no longer quarrel with the humbling doctrines of our Church, but love them, and we shall deem those ministers most orthodox and faithful, most edifying and profitable, who most fully and most experimentally preach unto you the Gospel of our only Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

"Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen."

SERMON V.

THE NEW OR HEAVENLY BIRTH.

JOHN III. 7.

Ye must be born again : or born from above.

Mar. Reading.

NICODEMUS was “a Ruler of the Jews,” that is, one of the great Council of the Jewish Nation. He appears to have been a sincere, but timid inquirer after divine truth. He probably had heard of Jesus, and of the many wonderful works which Jesus did. Not satisfied, however, with hearing of Him, Nicodemus sought a personal interview with Jesus, and came to our Lord. Being come to Him, Nicodemus said, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man could do these miracles which thou doest except God be with him.” And do you, then, might our Saviour think, believe me to be a teacher come from God, and yet come yourself to me by stealth, as one afraid to acknowledge the authority by which I teach and act?—Without noticing the Ruler’s very flattering address, our Lord immediately replied, “Verily, verily,

I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Unknowing how this could be, and perhaps doubting the possibility of the thing, Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" This only led our Lord still more emphatically to declare, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Nicodemus marvelled: but wherefore should he have felt surprise if Jesus Christ had meant no more than that a man must be initiated into his Church, either by circumcision or by baptism? "Marvel not," continues this gracious teacher of enquiring minds—"marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again." "As a child of Adam your nature is depraved; your understanding is darkened; your will is perverted; your memory is tenacious of evil; your heart is prone to fix on present and earthly things; and therefore unless your powers and faculties can be changed, enlightened, and renewed, it is morally impossible for you either to discern the nature or to enjoy the pleasures of my Father's kingdom. And such is the change you must experience, that it is as if you were to be "born a second time"—brought into a state of new and spiritual being, with new views, new perceptions, and new propensities. Be not, therefore, surprised when I so solemnly and repeatedly aver that "*Ye MUST be BORN AGAIN,*" or from above, after a supernatural or heavenly manner.'

Now I trust that you also, to whom I speak, are come unto Jesus, to be taught by him in the truths essentially necessary to your salvation. You have heard the answer made by Jesus Christ unto the Jewish Ruler: but, it may be, like him, you are wondering in yourselves "how these things can be." Do not, however, be offended with our statement, as though it were

a matter incredible or unintelligible, when I say to you, “Ye must be born again.” Be your hearts upraised to God for “an unction from the Holy One,” whilst I endeavour simply to shew you from these words,

I. Wherein the New Birth consists,
And II. Whence arises the necessity of it.

I am to shew you,

I. *Wherein the NEW BIRTH consists:—*

What it *is* will more evidently appear if we say, first, what it is *not*. The mere outward administration of the Ordinance of *Baptism* cannot be deemed the New Birth here required. We do not doubt but some may be regenerated or born anew in baptism, but we much doubt whether many be so. Some few we see piously disposed from their earliest years, and a heavenly bias *might* have been given to their mind in and with the ordinance of baptism; but, it is undeniably true, that the generality of baptized persons are openly and notoriously wicked—void, totally void, of all gracious disposition and spirituality of mind whatsoever. Can we call *such* persons regenerated or born from above? We would give to baptism all the solemnity and importance justly due to it, and we would charitably hope that the child we baptize ‘is regenerate:’ but we cannot think ‘the outward and visible sign’ must *necessarily*, in *all* cases, be accompanied with ‘the inward and spiritual grace.’ It is truly “not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that are not christened, but it is also a SIGN *of regeneration or new birth*, whereby, as by an instrument, THEY THAT RECEIVE BAPTISM RIGHTLY *are grafted into the Church.*”^a It is a *sign to those who re-*

^a Article xxvii.

ceive it rightly, of greater and more substantial good. This good is obtained ‘by virtue of prayer unto God :’ but how faithless, how heartless, how graceless, are the prayers of many that encircle our baptismal font ! We wonder not that those who most strenuously maintain the notion of baptismal regeneration, are constrained to allow the necessity, in the generality of baptized persons, of a ‘renovation’ subsequent to their baptism. Only let this renovation be inward and spiritual, and not merely outward and formal, and all acrimonious disputes about the New Birth will cease. We contend not about *words*, but *things*. And that baptism is not the New Birth—and that baptized persons are not therefore necessarily born from above because they are baptized, your own personal experience will best prove to you. Examine yourselves, and you will soon see whether ‘the old Adam be dead in you,’ and ‘the new man be raised up in you ;’—whether you really have been buried with Christ by baptism, and quickened by the Spirit into new and spiritual life. Remember, the great Teacher of our Faith required, that a man must be born “not of water *only*, but of *the Spirit*” also. Of “water” you may have been born : but are you “born of *the Spirit* ?” Have you received baptism *rightly* ? With “*the washing of regeneration*,” there must be “*the renewing of the Holy Ghost* :” and it is only where ‘the outward sign’ has been accompanied or followed by ‘the inward grace,’ that any one is really ‘dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness’—or, from ‘being by nature a child of wrath,’ really become ‘a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven.’ Baptism admits into the visible Church : it is the regeneration of the Spirit that unites us to Christ.

Moreover, no *reformation or alteration of the Life*

constitutes the New Birth. Many will say—‘ We must reform and alter our lives, in order to be born again.’ Amendment of life is the *effect*, not the *cause* of regeneration. Man’s condition since the Fall is so weak and helpless, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by any unaided ability of his own, to faith or calling upon God. The *nature* of the corrupt tree must be changed ere it can produce good fruits. Men may boast themselves indeed of their relationship to God, and call themselves “trees of his planting:” but he will say, “Wherefore, when I looked that ye should bring forth grapes, brought ye forth wild grapes?” Fruits there may be—fair and honourable in human view: on these man may look; and *he* can look no further; but “the LORD (be it remembered) looketh on the *heart*:” and before him, a reformation or an alteration of the life cannot possibly supersede a conversion of the soul.

Further, a *profession of Religion* is not the New Birth. To a sober, honest, industrious life, may be added an observance of the Sabbath; attendance at Church; giving alms; partaking of the Communion; and, indeed, every thing that constitutes a religious profession; and yet all this may exist where there is no participation of the Holy Ghost,^a no spiritual discernment,^b no joy in God,^c no freedom from the bondage of corruption and the fear of man,^d no cordial delight in the Law,^e no zeal for works really good;^f in fine, *nothing* that marks the character of a child of grace and an heir of glory. What was Nicodemus? A professor and a teacher of religion; one that entertained favourable thoughts of Christ (which many an one called *Christian* scarcely does)—and came to him for instruction: and yet to *him*, and doubtless in him to us, did our Redeemer say,

^a Heb. vi. 4.^b 1 Cor. ii. 14.^c Rom. v. 11.^d 2 Cor. iii. 17.^e Rom. vii. 22.^f Gal. iv. 18.

“YE must be born again.” And what was Simon? A man convinced of sin, apprehensive of danger, (something more than many a professor amongst us ever felt) admitted by baptism into the visible Church of Christ, desirous to receive the Holy Ghost, and yet with all his pretences to godliness, and notwithstanding his baptism itself, most plainly told that he was “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.”

If, then, neither outward Baptism, nor Reformation of Life, nor a Profession of Religion, be the New Birth, wherein does it consist? or what is it? I will tell you *what* it is: it is a *supernatural*, an *internal*, a *universal*, a *sensible*, and a *visible change*.

It is a *supernatural* change. We mean by supernatural, that which is above the power of Nature to effect. As man cannot create, so neither can he recreate himself. The New Birth, therefore, can only be effected by the power of God. “Who,” asks the Patriarch Job, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one”—is his positive and emphatic answer. “Can,” asks the prophet Jeremiah, “*Can* the Ethiopian change his skin or the Leopard his spots?” Assuming that they cannot do so, the Prophet answers, “So no more can ye do good that have been accustomed to do evil.” And, says a greater than Jeremiah or Job, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh”—and would still be flesh, how repeatedly soever it might be so born, nor could it possibly possess any other than fleshly or carnal propensities. In truth, mankind can no more quicken themselves into new and spiritual life, than the buried dead can, of themselves, burst the bands of Death asunder, vacate their graves, and reassume the businesses and cares of mortal life. In wickedness were we shapen, and in sin conceived; and therefore, in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing. If so, then it

follows, "No man hath quickened his own soul." And if no man *hath* quickened, no man *can* quicken his own soul. It must, then, be by a supernatural power that any persons are born again. And so it is written, "It is *the Spirit* that quickeneth; the *flesh* profiteth nothing." Spiritual life is that thing which, as our Church acknowledges, by nature we cannot have. It is "*of the Spirit*" as the Divine and Gracious *Agent*, and *by the Word* as the appointed *means*, that we are thus "begotten again."^a The Spirit works at various times and in various ways—as, and *how*, and *where*, "he listeth:" but He is the alone Regenerator, and the regeneration he effects is therefore universally a *supernatural* change.

It is, too, an *internal* change. This remark we have anticipated, by saying, that no mere reformation of the life can be the New Birth. We cannot, however, too particularly insist on the doctrine of an inward and a spiritual change. Turn to Ezekiel xxxvi. verse 26, and you will find God promising "a new *heart* and a new *spirit*;" and which new heart and spirit He will "put *within* us." And again he says, in verse 27, "I will put MY *spirit* within you, and cause you to walk in my way." Now, this was said well nigh 600 years before the Son of God became incarnate, and yet Jesus Christ preaches and perpetuates the doctrine of a change of heart and mind. The word commonly used in Greek for 'repentance' implies a change of the affections and dispositions. Paul says, "with the *heart* a man believeth unto righteousness." It is in the *heart* the love of God is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost. Peace, too, rules in the *heart* of the regenerate. We are wont to beseech God to 'cleanse the thoughts of

^a 1 Pet. i. 22, 23.

our *heart*,' and that 'we may daily be renewed in the *spirit of our mind*.' All which expressions shew that the New Birth is an *internal* thing, and that to be really born again we must be inwardly changed. As by generation "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," so by regeneration it must become the seat of all piety and truth. Few, indeed, think thus. Often do we hear it said—'Practice is every thing: so that a man's life be good, it little matters what he believes or thinks.' But, *we* say, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" and whatsoever proceeds not from a gracious and spiritual principle, the 13th Article of our Church declares, is not pleasing or acceptable to God. We must be "born of the Spirit" in order *to be* spiritually minded: and without this divine and *internal* change, no outward duties will constitute a truly regenerated character.

But, I said, the New Birth was a *universal* change. If the corruption of human nature be deep and universal, (and who that believes the Bible can doubt its depth and universality?) our regeneration must be equally deep and universal. "From *all* your filthiness and from *all* your idols, will I cleanse you," is a gracious God's recorded promise. Our Prayer is '*perfectly* to love Him, and *worthily* to magnify His holy name.' Now, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin," and on whomsoever it is "sprinkled, it purgeth the conscience from dead works;" whilst the Holy Spirit, as a hallowing fire, sanctifies and renews all the powers of the pardoned and accepted sinner. We say *all* the powers; for where this change takes place, the understanding is enlightened, the will is subdued, the disposition is newly biassed, the imagination is purified, selfishness is expelled, the heart is humbled, and, as the unfailing consequence of all—the life is

truly reformed. Regenerating grace assimilates man's nature to God's nature, man's will to God's will, man's mind to God's mind.^a In short, we are "*transformed* by the renewing of our mind,"^b—*transfigured** as was Jesus in the holy Mount: we catch somewhat of his radiancy, and "put on the *new* man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Surely then where "old things are thus passed away and all things become new," the change must be great and *universal*.

And can this change take place, and the subject of it remain unconscious of his spiritual birth? No: it is a *sensible* change. The persons in whom it is wrought are, in general, as sensible of it as of their existence. I say, in *general*; because I believe that some are drawn so easily and gently by the Father, to the Son, that they know not how or when their minds were first wrought upon: whereas, commonly, sinners are roused from their death-like slumbers by alarm and terror—"cut (as were those under Peter's Ministry, Acts ii. 37) to the heart"—constrained to cry for mercy, from an agonizing sense of sin—humbled deeply before the Lord—and led to see, that but for sovereign favour through the blood of Christ, they should deservedly be condemned for ever. Whether "the fire" or "the earthquake" or "the small still voice" produce it, conviction of sin is the same, and discovers the same needs—be for the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, in all true penitents. When these, in their richness and sufficiency, are perceived, the graciousness of God will be tasted; the sweetness of his mercy will be felt; a principle of spiritual life will be perceived; the sincere milk of the word will be de-

^a 2 Pet. i. 3—4. Eph. vi. 7. 1 Pet. iv. 1.

^b Rom. xii. 2.

* So the word "*transformed*" reads in the original.

sired ; self will become nothing, the Saviour all in all ; the formality of religion will be lost in its power ; the world will appear to be what it really is, while God is not known in it—a passing phantom ; its good will now be really and thankfully enjoyed, and beyond it will “glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life” brighten on the believing view of the converted man. Can all this take place, we again demand, and the subject of the change be unconscious of it?—Let us suppose some captive wretch to be brought out of

“Dungeon horrors, darkness and stench,
Where he had lain the worm’s inferior :”

place him on some fair eminence, where above him stretch the heavens in azure brilliancy, and around and far beyond his ken the works of nature spread in rich and beautiful variety ; will no gladness thrill through his recently dejected bosom ? will no trace remain in memory’s records of his former wretchedness ? will nothing assure him of his emancipation ? Most certainly there will : and *as certainly* may a child of God “look to the rock whence he was hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence he was digged,” and adore sensibly the gracious Agent of his deliverance. “A spirit of adoption” will assure him of his safety and lead him to “joy in the Lord, and to rejoice in the God of his salvation.” Some will say, ‘Our affections or feelings have nothing to do with our religion :’—They truly have nothing to do with the religion of *those* who say so : but the sorrows and the pains of remorse ; the peace which passeth understanding ; the hope which maketh not ashamed ; hunger and thirst after righteousness ; patience in tribulation—are all things to be experienced, perceived, and *felt* ; and therefore the New Birth must necessarily be—if not in its commence-

ment, at least, in its progress and effects, a *sensible* change.

And now we are brought, finally, to say, that the New Birth is a *visible* change. Where this change is mercifully wrought, anger, pride, malice, envy, falsehood,—disappear; and humility, meekness, love, truth, kind and forbearing gentleness, become apparent. As with the wind which bloweth where it listeth, we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is it with every one that is born of the Spirit. We see the effects of the mighty wind or the gentler breeze; though we know not the mode of their operation: In like manner do we witness the reality of spiritual influences, in the effects which they produce. A man's New Birth is evident to *himself*. He loves, affects, and seeks spiritual things; whereas, he once did not, but felt utterly averse to them and was ignorant of their intrinsic excellence. It is evident to *others*. If one from the remotest corner of the globe, that had experienced a similar change, should meet him, there would be a congeniality of taste and feeling between them. They would meet each other as brethren. The unregenerate, too, though they feel at a loss to account for it, observe the change: they see the drunkard become sober, the swearer fearing an oath. They marvel, indeed, to see such things: and because they are themselves condemned by the improved conduct of their friend or neighbour, they must needs, therefore, to screen and excuse their own supineness and indifference, “cast out *his* name as evil,” and say—no matter what, even if it be,—“Thou hast a devil and art mad.” Thus *visible*, however, is the change which God the Holy Ghost effects in every true member of the Redeemer's holy and Catholic Church. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth

any thing, nor uncircumcision, *but a NEW CREATURE* ;” and “*if any man BE in Christ, he IS a new creature* ;” and has experienced that *supernatural, internal, universal, sensible, and visible CHANGE* without which, it is the declaration of “the Truth” itself, a man can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God.

Such, then, Beloved, is the New Birth—whether you may have heard it called, Conversion, Regeneration, Renovation, or any thing else : It comes in the end to this, “ye must be *born again, or from above.*”

I am now to show you

II. *Whence arises the NECESSITY of it* :—

The *Necessity* of the new birth could easily be demonstrated from many passages of Holy Writ : but without departing from the words of our text, you hear the Lord Jesus Christ declare—“Ye MUST be born again.” Now this necessity arises,

1. From the character of Him who declares it ;

And 2. From the New Birth’s being absolutely necessary, in order both to our present and eternal happiness.

Consider 1. *The character of him who declares it.* Jesus Christ was with the Father “as one brought up with him,” and everlastingly “his delight.” Jesus Christ had “a glory” indescribable and unutterable “with the Father before the World was.” “By him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him and for him.” When

one world fell from its allegiance to its Maker, and became the apostate and rebellious province of his great empire, Jesus Christ came personally to reclaim its miserable people ; to expiate, by his own voluntary sufferings and death, the guilt of their apostasy and rebellion ; to dissipate by his instruction their moral and spiritual darkness, and to be himself the Exemplar of all that he taught to mankind. As “a Teacher come from God,” Nicodemus acknowledged him, and in this acknowledged character, did Jesus Christ declare, “Ye *must* be born again.” Circumcision, (and therefore no other mere initiatory rite) He could not mean by being born again ; for Nicodemus was already circumcised, and was by circumcision already admitted into the Jewish Church ; and yet our Lord solemnly and repeatedly insists on the Necessity of a new and heavenly birth. Now, can it be supposed that Jesus Christ would teach a trivial or non-essential matter ? Can it be supposed that he would say what he did not mean ? Did he say, “ye *must* be born again,” and is there no positive necessity for our being so “renewed in the spirit of our mind ?” Depend upon it, as surely as Jesus Christ said “Ye *must* be born again,” so surely *must* we be supernaturally, internally, universally, sensibly, and visibly changed. Call the New Birth what you please : Believe yourselves, if you will, to have been born again in your Baptism ; yet must there be a very great change of heart experienced, before you can possibly be the true disciples of Christ, or “set to your seal that his Testimony is true.” Born again we *must* be, or the doctrine of Jesus Christ will be proved unnecessary and delusive : Born again we *must* be, or be excluded for ever from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power. It is the grand preliminary to our participation of the kingdom and triumph

of the Son of God. "Heaven and Earth may pass away, but his Word shall not pass away." Every tittle of that Word must be fulfilled; and thus may we see the Necessity of the New Birth from *the character of Him who declares it.*

But we may see it (2) *From its being absolutely necessary both to our present and eternal happiness.* It is absolutely necessary to our *present* happiness. People may pretend to be happy in an unrenewed state, but really to be so is impossible. The carnal mind, (that is, the mind unchanged in its affections and desires) is enmity against God, and whilst that enmity against God remains, there can be no satisfaction or enjoyment. "Who will shew us any good?" is Nature's universal cry, and from natural principle, all men affect happiness: but "the light of God's countenance" alone imparts it, and *this* it is not the property of nature to affect or value. If earthly riches, worldly wisdom, or sensual delights, could ever have made a human being happy, Solomon would have been the happy man: yet, lo! *this* is the very individual that cries, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Nor is he singular in this respect. The unregenerate of every age are constrained to allow, that the world in which we sojourn is, with all its apparent good, an unsatisfying, a poor, and an empty portion, without a hope beyond it. This strongly indicates the necessity of a peculiar change. To be inwardly serene amidst outward tumults—to be resigned and cheerful amidst the sorrows, the privations, and disappointments of life, we *must* be spiritually minded. And where the new-creating energy of the Holy Ghost hath "begotten us again unto a lively hope," what a different scene of things appears! *Before* we wandered in ways erroneous, troublous, and dangerous: *now* we walk in ways of pleasantness and paths of peace. *Be-*

fore we “hated God,” and “would none of Him:” *now* we love him, and can say with satisfying gladness, “The Lord is my portion: whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire in comparison of Thee.” *Before* we “saw no form or comeliness” in Jesus Christ: *now* He is our “Beloved,” and “the Altogether Lovely.” *Before*, it may be, we could treat with derision the subject of spiritual influence on the human mind; *now* our “Comforter” is “the Holy Ghost,” and “we are not ignorant of Satan’s devices.” *Before* we could (as we believed) reconcile the opposing services and interests of “two Masters;” *now* we renounce “Mammon,” and “cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord.” *Before* “a name to live” contented us; *now* we are “alive.” *Before* the pleasures of sense were all-agreeable to us: *now* those of a purer, nobler, and more enduring kind are preferable. *Before* Religion was a gloomy, melancholy thing; *now* it is the “one thing needful,”—and to sit at the feet of Jesus, and to hear His word, is “the very joy and rejoicing of our heart.” Thus does “the Spirit witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God;” and the children of God need scarcely to be told that “the blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it.”

And if the New Birth be thus absolutely necessary to our present, it is no less absolutely necessary to our *eternal* happiness. So absolutely necessary is it, that there is no entering Heaven without it. The necessity of being born from above arises from the very nature of things. Supposing it possible for an unconverted man to enter the kingdom of God, he could not be happy there—it would be NO *Heaven to him*. The company, the employments, the pleasures, the converse, of the place would be all offensive to him—would be all at variance with his feelings, his dispositions, and his wants.

Would you see this proved to demonstration? Bring a worldly, wicked man into a company of serious, godly people: let the latter maintain a “conversation according to the Gospel of Christ”—let them read His Word, shew forth His praises, and supplicate His mercies. What would the man whom we have brought in supposition among them, enjoy of it all? Why, nothing whatever; and it would be felt by him as a deliverance from thralldom to be free from his associates. Then let this man die: let him, if it be possible, enter the kingdom of God in an unrenewed state: what would he do there? how could he join the higher praises, and the sublimer worship of the heavenly world? Would the visible glory of the Eternal God, or the society of un-fallen angels, and of redeemed sinners delight him? No! and why? Because his *nature* bears no resemblance to their’s, and his *taste* savours not spiritual things. Heaven itself, then, would be a strange place, and a place void of felicity to one not “born *from above*.” But how would it be with the spiritually-minded man—the “new creature in Christ Jesus”—the child of God’s adopting and regenerating grace, in the world of glory? Would it be a strange place to *him*? Oh! no: it is the land of his spiritual nativity: it is therefore to him a “place beautiful for situation,” and equally pleasant with its situation, are its society, its converse, and its worship. Having passed the waves of this troublesome world, the Christian gains “the haven where he would be.” By and by he will re-appear among the manifested sons of God, and enter into the full fruition of his blessed hope. *Before* he saw “through a glass darkly, *now* he will see face to face;” *before* he communed with an unseen Saviour, and worshipped with the Church in its militant and preparatory state; *now* he will enjoy the immediate vision of

his Lord, and worship with the Church triumphant. Grace is ripened into Glory. The grapes of Eschol are forgotten in the abundance of Canaan: the beginnings of happiness are lost in its consummation. As he that is *not* “born of the Spirit” *cannot* enter into the kingdom of God, so to him that *is* born of the Spirit, “an abundant entrance shall thereinto be ministered.” We, therefore, conclude, that *the New Birth is absolutely necessary both to our present and eternal happiness.*

I have now shewn you, and I hope simply, wherein the New Birth consists, and whence arises the necessity of it. A few words of ADVICE shall close this discourse.

I advise you then, Beloved, solemnly to enquire whether you be, in the Scriptural and obvious import of the expression, *born from above* or not. Enquire, I pray you, into this matter. Seek a practical assurance rather than a groundless notion of your spiritual Birth. The Word of God affords you evidence, and by it you may come to some certain knowledge, and satisfactory conclusion, relative to your state and hopes. Do not too surely conclude that because you are baptized that you must therefore necessarily be born again. It is written—not ‘He that is baptized’ but—“He that is BORN OF GOD, *overcometh the world.*” Now, what is the world to you? Is it as an object crucified and dead to your affections and desires? Have you overcome alike its smiles and frowns? Allowing you have not overcome them, are you in the way to triumph over them?—Again it is written—not ‘He that is baptized’ but—“He that is BORN OF GOD, *doth not, cannot, commit sin.*” Now, how is it with you? Is sin, in its every form and kind, odious to you? Do you shrink from it as from the face of a Serpent? Cannot you willingly commit it? Is it the one “abominable thing” which you “hate” both in yourselves and others? Do you mourn in bit-

terness of spirit for the woes which your suffering Surety endured for sin?—Again it is written—not ‘Whoso is baptized’ but—“Whoso heareth and hath learned of the Father cometh unto Christ.” Came ye ever unto Christ? Come ye to him daily and continually? Receive ye “out of *his* fulness grace upon grace?” If not, can you have “heard and learned of the Father?” Finally (for the time would fail us to quote the many Scriptures which bear upon our subject) it is written—not ‘The fruit of baptism’ but—“The fruit of THE SPIRIT is love, joy, peace, long suffering, meekness, gentleness, faith, &c. Do these fruits severally and together grow in your hearts? Do they evince “that mind to be in you which was also in Christ Jesus?”—Enquire, I again beseech you. He was “not a Jew who was one only outwardly:” Can he be a Christian that is one only outwardly? Circumcision profited little when it was only “outward in the flesh:” Can Baptism profit more without ‘a death unto Sin and a New Birth unto righteousness?’ If, then, that Birth be a *supernatural* change, do not fancy you can renew yourselves: cry rather with David, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” If it be an *internal* change, do not conceive that any mere amendment of the outward life will suffice. The axe must be laid to the *root* of the corrupt tree, and not merely some of its branches felled. If it be a *universal* change, no favourite idol must be retained, no besetting sin be spared, no one virtue of the new man despised: “Behold, saith the Lord, I create *all* things new,” and therefore must you become new creatures, in order to inherit the new creation. If it be a *sensible* change, see to it that your acquaintance with the Truth be—not merely of a notional or a theoretical, but, of an experimental and an influential kind. If it be a *visible*

change, and “the light of Life” hath dawned upon you, and made you “children of the Light and of the Day,” then be your whole deportment radiant with candour, generosity, truth, and love. While though “favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness, and even in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord ;”^a let “*our Gospel come to you not in word ONLY, but ALSO in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.*”^b Then shall you “rejoice in that your names are written in Heaven.” Ministering spirits, whom the sorrows of your repentance gladdened, shall safely conduct you through Death’s shadowy vale, and beyond it in a new created world of sinless cloudless blessedness shall you “reign in life” with your all-glorious Creator, Saviour, and Regenerator, for ever and ever.

^a Isa. xxvi. 10.

^b 1 Thess. i. 5.

SERMON VI.

EZEKIEL'S VISION OF THE DRY BONES.

EZEKIEL XXXVII. 1—10.

And the hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. And caused me to pass by them round about; and, behold there were very many in the open valley, and lo! they were very dry. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord: Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo! the sinews and the flesh came up upon them; and the skin covered them above: but—there was no breath

in them. Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind ; prophecy, Son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, come from the four winds, O Breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied, as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.

I PURPOSE a familiar exposition of this portion of Holy Scripture. It is singularly beautiful and striking : and though written at a particular period, and on a special occasion, it is doubtless written for “*our* admonition” and instruction. While we approve not of far-fetched and unnatural deductions from the Word of God, we yet believe ourselves at liberty, with humility and modesty, to gather instruction from every part of the Sacred Volume, and to appropriate to our use whatever “holy men of old spake” or wrote “by the Holy Ghost.” This we deem of importance to be remarked, because an appropriation of our text to other and various things, will subsequently be perceived, which could not, of course, be contemplated by Ezekiel when he penned it. Our remarks, however, will be those of an obvious and a simple kind ; and in the stead of any formal arrangement of our matter, we shall notice the several incidents narrated in our text as they follow each other in succession.

“The hand of the Lord was upon me,” says the Prophet, “and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones.” In various ways was Jehovah wont to reveal his will to his servants. He appeared visibly to Adam and to Abraham : and with the latter “He talked as a man talketh to his friend.” By an audible voice he spake to Moses, and to Samuel also. “In

dreams and visions of the night" he spake to many : to Daniel and to Peter he thus spake. Paul appears to have been in a kind of rapture when the Gospel was revealed to him. John was "in the Spirit," that is, was under the full and powerful influence of the Holy Ghost, and in himself most spiritually and devoutly disposed, when "the revelations of Jesus Christ" were vouchsafed to him. In like manner was Ezekiel "carried out by the hand of Jehovah, *in the Spirit*" to "the valley of vision," and by the Spirit's powerful operation on his mind, he was enabled to discern the present degradation of his people, the means of their regeneration, and their eventual restoration to favour, to honour, and to glory. In none of these ways does the Lord speak to us. No new revelations of his will are to be expected in the present time. His word contains his mind, and there we are to search for it. The *ordinary* operations of the Spirit we may, indeed, desire and pray for. *These* ARE necessary, and without them it is impossible for us to discern spiritual things. (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Here, then, let us beseech the good hand of the Lord upon us, and beg him by his Spirit to "guide us into all Truth."

We notice now a certain *valley*. This valley is described as an "open valley," which we may suppose to mean a widely extended plain. When Ezekiel prophesied, the Jews were captives in Babylon. Babylon was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, and is believed to have been situated in a large and beautiful champaign. It was by the waters of Babylon that Judah's captives sat and wept when they remembered Zion. Hither was the Prophet brought in vision, and in the midst of this valley did the hand of the Lord set him down. We need not, however, confine our view to the valley of Judah's captivity or of Ezekiel's vision : we may

suppose the valley here described to be the world itself in which we sojourn. It may by accommodation include every part of the habitable globe, and be bounded only by the ends of the earth. Our world is one wide vale of mourning: often are our harps suspended on the willows. We are "strangers in a strange place;" and be situated wheresoever we may, "the valley of the shadow of death" stretches boundlessly around us. Here we are "set;" and from noticing the valley, we proceed to notice

The *bones* scattered over it. These are in *number* "many," "very many;" and in *condition* "dry," "very dry." The bones which Ezekiel saw were explained to signify "the whole house of Israel." So fallen, so depressed, so sorrowful, were they, at this time, that to nothing could the Holy Spirit compare them, as more aptly indicative of their state, than to "bones," "very dry" bones. Contemplate a bone: it has no life: it lies inert and motionless: its moisture wastes: its substance perishes. Such was Israel's state. Nor is this state peculiar to Israel: mankind generally and universally over all the earth are the same fallen and depraved creatures by nature. We are all in bondage; we are all oppressed and sorrowful. "From the crown of our head to the sole of our foot, there is no soundness in us." "Our strength is dried up." "The multitude of our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth:"^a and scattered are they at the grave's mouth in great and profuse abundance. It is calculated that there exist a thousand millions of human beings. Must we not, then, allow that there are "very many" in the world's wide valley? And what is the spiritual condition of these

^a Psalm cxli. 7.

millions of human beings? Of the thousand millions, six hundred millions are said to be heathens: many millions are Mahomedans; some millions are Jews, and other millions, again, are “worshippers of the beast,”^a and followers of “the Man of Sin.”^b Of the remaining millions that bear a christian name, how few do we find to be like-minded with Christ! Are not, then, the bones of our valley “dry,” “very dry?”—But we may contract our survey: we need not look abroad over the world’s wide surface: we need only look at home and over the little spot on which we dwell, and we shall see many dry, very dry bones about us. In Egypt, an exceeding great and bitter cry was heard when the first-born of every family was found dead: is there not many a family in our land where not one of all its members is spiritually alive? Are we ourselves alive? Are our “bones made fat,” and are “our souls” rich and luxuriant in blessing “as a watered garden?” Rather, are not many of us as dead to God and to the things of Eternity, as the buried bodies of our departed friends are dead to the world and to the things of time?—God, however, in infinite mercy, condescends to notice us: from His high and lofty dwelling-place, He looks inquiringly down and says, “CAN *these dry bones live?*”

Let us consider this *inquiry*. The people of Israel and Judah had lost their existence as a nation: they were “a people cast out, trodden down, scattered and peeled.” Many of them were indifferent to their situation, forgetful of the land of their fathers; unmindful of their former glory, and not solicitous to regain it. “Can they then live?” saith the Lord to his servant. The inquiry is intended to try the faith, to exercise the hope, and to awaken the desire of Ezekiel. A Minister

^a Rev. xiii. 3, 12.

^b 2 Thess. ii. 3.

of God needs trials to fit him for his work. Perhaps there are few or none whom the Holy Ghost moves to take the ministerial office on them but who are prepared for it by trials of faith, struggles with sin, and "fightings" with the great enemy of Christ and of his Church. Certainly trials make our ministry the more efficient and teach us more sensibly to "weep with them that weep." It is no little pain to us to witness the state of our people. We see among them many "*dead* in trespasses and sins;" others with less consideration than the ox or the ass, and so altogether earthly and sensual that they "may well be compared to the beasts which perish." We see no desire in many to come out of Babylon, to regain the grandeur of their former greatness, and to repossess the Canaan of blissful holiness. We have "continual sorrow and heaviness in our heart" for them, and when amidst the fruitlessness of our labours on their behalf we are asked, "*Can they live?*" we can only reply to the inquiry, as the Prophet did—"*O Lord God, thou knowest.*"

This *answer* let us notice. God had said to Moses, "I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal." Ezekiel, therefore, had ground whereon, amidst manifold discouragements, to stay the assurance of his faith, and to believe that what was "impossible with man was possible with God." Nor have we less ground for faith in the power of God than Ezekiel had. We are sure that God could "even of these stones raise up children unto Abraham." To the inquiry, *Can they live?* "we have the *answer* (marginal reading) of Death in ourselves, that we should not *trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead.*" Even such "dry bones" as we *can* live when the Lord God wills and commands it. For our people, too, we look, amidst all our tribulations on

their behalf, to our Saviour-God, and “in the bowels of Jesus Christ, we long” for the commencement of light, and life, and liberty in their souls. “Wilt thou not, we say, turn again and revive us, that thy people may rejoice in thee?” “Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?” Shall thine Israel never be redeemed? Shall the years of their mourning know no close? Thou knowest they can live, and even “be born in a day” when Thou pleasest: “Oh! let us live, and we shall glorify Thy Name.”—Graciously does the Lord direct the labours of his servant,—“*Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord.*”

This *direction* respecting the bones is very observable. They were dry, very dry, and yet Ezekiel was directed to “prophecy upon them.” They were to be addressed as if they possessed sensibility and life: “O ye dry bones, *hear* the Word of the Lord.” This very plainly intimates that sinners—sinners in whom we can discern nothing but “a carnal mind” and its inseparable “enmity against God,” are to be addressed in our public ministrations of the Word. If mankind *be* void, generally, of spiritual life or perception, it is the fault and corruption of their nature. And however faulty and corrupt that nature may be, man must still be accountable for the deeds done in it. If our “bones say not, Lord, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him,” it is simply because we cry not, “Heal me, O Lord, for my bones are vexed;” and we cry not, simply because we have no disposition to accept the humbling salvation of the Gospel. In like manner do many “stop their ears and harden their hearts” against the preached Word. Preach, however, we must “upon” the dry bones of our valleys. ‘We preach not to sinners,’ say some:—they are ambassadors to the saints, as they pretend: but Ezekiel, Peter, Paul, and

John, all were commissioned to “rebuke” as well as to “exhort”—to preach the needs-be for penitence in sinners as well as faith in the elect. A greater than them all preached repentance, and still by his Word “God commandeth *all men every where* to repent.” If we be not to preach to careless and ungodly persons, I wonder whom we are to preach to: for the world, alas! is “full” of them, and alas! also, they are “very dry.” Is it said, “There is a remnant according to the election of grace?” Very true; there undoubtedly is, and “the *Lord* knoweth them that are his:” but since *we* do not, we must proclaim “peace as well to them that are afar off, as to them that are nigh.” We must come to the Babylon of ignorance, unbelief, and sin—come to the valley of vision, and say to the driest bones we meet with there,—“O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.” “Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear,” our commission is the same. Our duty plainly is to “preach the Word; to be instant in season and out of season.” We shall be “a sweet savour unto God *both* in them that believe and in them that perish;” and though our heart may feel a pang of grief for those to whom “our Gospel comes in word only,” yet are we encouraged to “prophecy upon them” by the sweet assurance that, “The hour cometh and now is when *the dead* shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.” “Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, *I* will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and *I* will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.” And “is *any* thing too hard for the Lord?” “Hath he said, and shall he not do it?” “Hath he spoken, and shall he not bring it to pass?”—Israel shall live when it pleases Israel’s

God. "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body (says He that was dead and is alive again and liveth for evermore) shall they arise:" and, quickened into new and spiritual being, we poor "dust and ashes" shall become "members of a Saviour's flesh and of his bones." The great end and design, too, of the Ministry may be here observed. God could quicken and regenerate whom He would without man's instrumentality or word: but he is pleased to put honour on his gospel, and to make its ministers vessels of mercy and instruments of good to their fellow-creatures. "*Thus saith the Lord,*" is the ministerial watch-word: and "*the word of the Lord,*" through the Spirit's agency, becomes the mighty means of turning mankind "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Hence we read, "of his own will begat he us with the word of truth;" that is, of God's will as the *source* of our regeneration, are we *born again* by means of the word of truth. "Quick and powerful" is his word when the Holy Ghost falls with it on them that hear it.^a And in the believing hope that it will ever prove itself to be "*the sword of the Spirit,*" we say to one and all of you, "O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord." "Hear, and your souls shall live." Dry ye may be, very dry; but unless "ye might have life," God would never have commanded his word to be preached unto you.^b

Such was the *direction* given to Ezekiel. Mark now his *observance* of it. "*So I prophesied,* says he, *as I was commanded.*" How or in *what manner* the dry bones should hear the word of the Lord, did not concern Ezekiel. God commanded him to prophesy; that was enough: it was for him, without, for a moment, ques-

^a Acts x. 44.

^b John v. 40.

tioning the wisdom, or the propriety, or the utility of the command, to do as he was commanded. And he did so. And happy is the Minister who, like the Prophet, can truly say, “So I prophesied *as I was commanded!*” Few, we fear, could do as we find in Acts xx. 27. St. Paul did—appeal to their hearers and say, “I take *you* to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men: for I have not shunned to declare unto you *ALL* the counsel of God.” It is only, however, by a faithful declaration of God’s counsel in its fulness that we can be “pure from the blood of all men.” *As* we are commanded, *so* must we speak. The watchman of the house of Israel must hear the word at God’s mouth, and warn them from him. And he that hath his word, must declare it faithfully. The truth which may be the least acceptable, and the most opposed to the habits and pursuits of our hearers, must we as plainly declare as that which is the more agreeable. Human systems must not warp our judgment, or induce a thought contrary to God’s Word. Ignorance must be exposed: Sin must be reproved: Pride must be detected: Self must be humbled: Christian principle inculcated: the obedience of faith required. And truly privileged is that people, who, in their Minister, possess a man devoted first to the Lord, and then to them, and whose sole aim it is, as much as in him lieth, to teach his people “the good and the right way,” and to “save their souls alive.” Such an one shall not labour in vain. The will and purpose of God shall be accomplished, and his “Word shall not return unto him void.”

This will appear in the *effect* which Ezekiel’s prophesying produced. “So,” says he, “I prophesied as I was commanded, and as I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And when I beheld, lo! the sinews

and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above : but—there was no breath in them.” “As he prophesied” this effect was produced. Bone met its kindred bone. A trembling apprehension pervaded them. The whole multitude of bones were chastened as with pain and shook by alarm. Flesh and sinews came upon them and skin covered them above. The form and fashion of a man appeared—but still there was no breath to animate the newly organized body. An effect similar exactly to this may be produced under the ministry of the Gospel. As we preach, impressions may be made ; convictions may be felt ; a “noise and a shaking” may be heard amongst the spiritually dead ; sinners, before careless and unconcerned, may begin to enquire ; bone may meet its kindred bone ; knowledge may increase, and profession follow it, and *yet* no breath may animate the whole. Often do we see all the parts of a religious profession almost perfect and entire : but, on closer scrutiny, we find there is no real sensibility or life. We might suppose a man lying in yonder field to be only asleep : when we come to him we may find him really dead. In like manner, many have “a *Name* to live, that are destitute of the spirit of life.” Many are convinced that are probably never converted. Many are brought out of darkness into light, that are not turned from Satan unto God. “A spirit of bondage” may be endured, where “a spirit of adoption” is never enjoyed. A way may “seem right unto a man” that does but “*seem*” so, and “the *end* of which is death.” The prophet saw the bones of the valley brought together and re-organized ; but there was still no breath in them. In like manner may we see our people congregated, and “the *form* of godliness” assumed, but no vitality may be felt—no “*power*” of godliness experienced. This the Lord

knows, and therefore condescends still further to direct his servant's labours.

This *further direction* now calls for our attention. "Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live." Human eloquence, combined with human effort, may effect somewhat of a moral revolution in a people's character; but it is not, as we have seen, even in an Ezekiel's power to impart life to the dead. Hence was he directed to beseech a breath to come from the four winds, and breathe upon the slain of Israel that they might live. Here we observe that "breath," or "wind," is in Scripture frequently significant of the *Holy Ghost*. It is somewhere said, "By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made, and all the host of them by *the breath* of his mouth:" that is, *Jehovah*, the *Word*, and the *Spirit*, by their individual and united energy, created the Heavens and their host. In John iii. 8, the Spirit's agency is compared to the *wind* which bloweth where it listeth. We are told also, that before our Lord reassumed his glory, he "breathed" on his disciples; indicating, doubtless, thereby, that they should receive a portion of that Spirit which was given without measure unto himself, and thus be animated with the breath of a Spiritual and Heavenly existence. On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit, as "the Spirit of promise," came upon the infant Church of the Redeemer, "like a rushing mighty wind," filling the house wherein they were assembled with his presence, and the hearts of all the Redeemer's followers with joy and gladness. Still is this celestial breath necessary to give vigour to our word and life to our souls. The word alone and of itself quickens not: for then all our hearers would be "alive unto God." Nor does the

morality or the wisdom of man give power and unction to our speech : for then would not the most moral and the wisest be the first to receive the truth ? whereas they are usually the last.^a Unless the Spirit be with the heart of the hearer, the Word of the teacher is barren. Let no man attribute to the teacher what he understands from his mouth ; for, unless there be an internal teacher, the tongue of the external one labours in vain. Why is there such a difference in the sensations of hearers, all hearing the same words ? It is to be ascribed to this special teaching. John himself, in his Epistle, states the same ; “ the anointing teacheth you of all things.” This is “ the unction ” which alone can give vitality to the soul and reality to religion. Bones there may be ; sinews, flesh, and skin : but only God the Holy Ghost can infuse a principle of animation and existence. His presence is living and powerful ; it awakens the slumbering soul : it moves, softens, wounds, and heals the hard, stony, and distempered heart. It waters the dry places, illumines the dark, inflames the cold, makes the crooked straight, and the rough ways plain. This, be it observed, is no doctrine of human devising : “ THUS SAITH THE LORD GOD.” It is the LORD GOD who teaches the necessity of a divine influence : it is the LORD GOD who bids his servant say, “ Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live.” Let none, then, fear to call upon “ the Lord the Spirit,” as though it were derogatory to the Father’s glory, or to the Saviour’s honour, to *pray to the Holy Ghost*. The Church of England directly and repeatedly addresses the *Spirit* in prayer, and therefore surely fault cannot be justly found with those teachers who implore his aid, and beseech

^a Matt. xxi. 31, 32.

him to make the ministry of the Gospel effectual to the regeneration and salvation of their people. Though we know not whence he comes or whither he goes—though we feel not his entrance or his exit, yet, *from the motion of our heart*, we understand that he is present. And since the Holy Ghost is given to be “ever” with the Saviour’s Church, and must ever, till the time of the restitution of all things, “be the Spirit of Promise,” how should we be stimulated to pray for his new-creating energy ! how importunately should we cry, Come, O Breath ! and how should we “put Jehovah in remembrance” of his own command, and pray him, by his omnipresent, all-pervading, and eternal Spirit, to breathe upon our slain that they may live !

To this, I hope, we shall feel encouraged when we notice the *result* of Ezekiel’s labours. “So I prophesied, says he, as he commanded me, and the Breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army.” Wonderful result of Ministerial labour this ! But why should we call it wonderful ? Cannot he who first formed man of the dust, and breathed into him the breath of life, easily cause him to live anew ? The prophet’s hope of Israel’s restoration was now confirmed. In vision he already saw them freed from their bondage, and restored again to existence as a nation. Their harps were resumed. The Lord’s song was sung no longer in a strange land. Zion once more reared her drooping head, and the Lord had a people in Israel. And do we not see the same or similar effects resulting from the same cause amongst ourselves ? Where “the word comes in the Holy Ghost and with power,” are not the dead revived ? Again do “the lame walk and the blind receive their sight ; *the dead are raised*,” and immortal sinners saved. The Spirit broods over the universal

void within us, and reduces all things to order, harmony, and beauty. From the expulsion of vices, and the suppression of carnal affections, we perceive the strength of his power: from the discernment and the conviction of the very intents of our heart, we may admire the depth of his wisdom: from some little improvement in our temper and conduct, we experience the goodness of his grace: from the renovation of our inward man, we may perceive the comeliness of his beauty: and from the joint contemplation of all these things, we should tremble at his majestic greatness. Our bones may be waxen old or even consumed; but when the Lord brings us up out of our grave, (as he promised to bring his Israel, Ezek. xxxvii. 13,) we greatly, nobly, live: life assumes a reality unfelt before: we remain no longer "strangers and aliens," but become "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." The joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, the temptations and consolations of the Lord's people become familiar to us. We triumph in Christ, our "resurrection and our life." We "stand (quickened by the Spirit which raised Jesus our Lord from the dead) fast in the liberty" wherewith we have been freed. In duty, we feel a liveliness we never experienced before. Our feet move with cheerful willingness obedient to the will of God. Our baptismal vows cease to be unmeaning words. Gladly do we perceive the banner of Christ's love to wave over us: putting on "the whole armour of God," we swell the ranks of the armies of the true Israel, and gladly now would we "spend and be spent" in the service of a crucified Saviour. Such is the effect resulting from the Spirit's operation on the mind of man! such the delightful consequence of ministerial labour when wrought "not with the enticing words

of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power!"

We have now noticed the several things narrated in our text—the *valley*; the *bones* scattered so abundantly over it; the Lord's *inquiry* respecting them; the prophet's *answer* to it; the *direction* given to him how to act; his *observance* of it; a *further direction*; and the *result* of all his labours;—and I would, in closing, only SAY,

1. See here a picture of your natural state, and the means whereby alone that state can be bettered and improved. Ye are morally and spiritually dead—"dry, very dry." Quicken yourselves ye cannot. "No man hath quickened his own soul." The Lord God and his Spirit alone can re-organize and exalt to their proper and legitimate use your powers and faculties. He works by *means*—means which he hath devised that his banished ones be not for ever expelled from him.^a "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by *the Word* of God."^b Then, "O ye dry bones, HEAR *the Word of the Lord*." Attend with diligence the public ministration of it. A Minister (as one once said) may *pray* at home, but he cannot *preach* at home. Beware how ye neglect the preaching of the Word. And while we "prophecy upon you," join us when we cry, "Come, O Breath!" Only observe what a continual reference there is in all our services to the Holy Spirit's agency. *Mean* your prayers as well as *say* them. So will the Lord revive us. In his own good time will he raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.

2. Whilst, however, we apply these things to ourselves, let us not omit to observe their literal application to Israel. It is always to the Jew first; then also to

^a 2 Sam. xiv. 14.

^b Rom. x. 17.

the Gentile. God will yet fulfil the mercy promised unto Abraham and to his seed after him. And in the sacred portion we have noticed, we see in beautiful and striking figure, the national restoration of the ancient covenant people. In their own land they shall possess the double pardon and the double blessing reserved for them. Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. A fountain shall then be opened (for at present the great atonement of the Son of God, is a fountain sealed to *them*) to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. The Spirit shall be poured upon Judah's sons and daughters, and they shall stand up an exceeding great and blessed people in the faith of their once rejected King. Zephaniah iii. 14—20. must yet be accomplished.—The Lord hasten it in his time! Already the “shaking” is commenced, and speedily may Israel's resuscitation be as “life from the dead” to all the world beside!

The beam that shines on Zion's hill,
Shall lighten every land ;
The King who reigns in Zion's towers,
Shall all the world command.

SERMON VII.

FAITH AND UNBELIEF; WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE CONSEQUENCES.

JOHN iii. 36.

He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but, the wrath of God abideth on him.

THE separation of the soul from the body is *temporal* death; the approach of which is usually marked by failure of mental energy, painful weariness in the frame, and continually increasing debility: the separation of both body and soul from the Divine favour and influence in this world is *spiritual* death; of which, the common symptoms are, ignorance of God, contempt of his Word, worldliness of mind, and carelessness about salvation: the separation of the whole man from the Divine presence and glory in the world to come is *eternal* death; the ills of which, we believe, will be, hope destroyed, despair induced, desire insatiable awakened that can never be gratified, a sensibility of sin that will

prove a poisonous arrow in the very heart of existence, woe unutterable and irremediable. Hence, you see, there are three kinds of death—*temporal*, *spiritual*, and *eternal*. To all these kinds of death, Adam, and by consequence, all his descendants in him, became liable by eating the forbidden fruit. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Whether but for the Fall, we should have been subject to any kind of death, we can hardly say ; probably, I think not : for, together with “the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil,” there grew in the midst of the garden “the Tree of Life,” the fruit of which was guarded after the Fall, “lest man should put forth his hand, and take also of the Tree of Life, and eat and live for ever.” Besides, the threatened penalty of transgression was death : “in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” Existence, therefore, had probably been continued, had not the forbidden fruit been tasted. After the fruit was eaten, the natural life, indeed, of Man was spared ; he did not immediately return to the dust from whence he was taken : but Man died *spiritually*, and in the very day he ate of the Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil, the symptoms of spiritual death were at once perceivable in apostate Adam. He shunned his Creator’s presence ; a shame unfelt before suffused his countenance ; a disposition to extenuate the sinfulness of sin and to exonerate himself from blame, prevailed within him ; ungratefully did he reflect upon his kind and beneficent Creator relative to Eve, as though she had not been “an help meet for him”—all which proves how truly Adam had ceased to be *alive unto God*. He died spiritually, and would have died eternally, but for “the Seed” in whom he and all the families of the earth should eventually be blessed. And

“in Adam *all* die.” The portrait of mankind’s natural state may be traced in Romans, chap. i. and kindred Scriptures. We have no wish to exaggerate the evils of that state or offensively to pourtray them: but from the records of inspiration it appears too surely true, that man is *very far* gone from original righteousness, and is, of his own nature, corrupt and inclined to evil; “*alienated* from the life of God,” and “*dead* in trespasses and sins.” Now, in such a case, if the high and lofty One should deign at all to notice us, it would be, we might reasonably have expected, “to appoint us unto wrath,” and to give us up a prey to ‘the bitter pains of eternal death:’ but, no! “God hath *not* appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Satan, the thief, came to kill and to destroy: Jesus, the Deliverer, came that we might have life, and have it in a nobler manner and a more abundant measure than ever life was possessed or enjoyed by man before. Hence the blessed state we so unhappily lost in Adam is gloriously restored to us in Christ: and now “*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*”

In these words we observe—both the happy consequence of faith in Jesus Christ, and the unhappy consequence of unbelief.

Let us consider the two points in order:—

And I. *The happy consequence of believing on the Son of God.*

And *what* is this happy consequence? In one emphatic word, it is *Life; everlasting life* to the believer. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” In these words our Lord Jesus Christ is presented to us in a view which, I conceive, we too

seldom consider him ; namely, as the Father or Representative of his people. That he is our federal Head, in whom we are represented, is manifest from Rom. v. 18, 19. and all those various Scriptures which speak of our being “circumcised in Christ ;” “crucified with Christ ;” “buried with him ;” “risen with him ;” “found in him ;” “accepted in him ;” and “seated in Heavenly places with him.” This we can only be but as we are represented in his person, and as being also ourselves interested in him by a true and lively faith. What Adam was, we were ; and what he did, affected all his posterity. What Christ is, believers are, and their’s also shall be the plenteous redemption that is in him. ‘He is the God which of his own mercy saveth us, and setteth out his charity and exceeding love towards us, in that of his own voluntary goodness, when we were perished, he saved us, and provided an everlasting kingdom for us.’^a “The first man was of the earth, earthy ; the second man is the Lord from Heaven. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the Heavenly.” Adam we may call *our death* : opposed to him, Jesus Christ is “*our life*.”^b “God hath given to his Son to have life in himself,” and as having life in himself, he is “the head” of influence and the source of spiritual existence to all his people. We “through grace believe” in him. This gracious Faith embraces the birth, the death, the resurrection and intercession of Jesus Christ. The believer’s union with him is of a vital influential kind : and thus “he that believeth on the Son hath life”—hath life in his *Redeemer*, life in *himself*, life in *promise*, and life in *prospect*.—First : He hath life in his *Redeemer* : “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” God gave us life in Adam ; this

^a Homily on Mis. of Mank.

^b Col. iii. 4.

life, with its attendant happiness, we lost: He gave us life again, and to secure the inestimable benefit to his believing children, He gave it—not directly to us, but to us *in his Son*. Hence is Christ ‘the life of them that believe, and the resurrection of the dead.’—The believer, too, has life in *himself*. Once he was as listless and unconcerned about spiritual things, as others who are still buried in the cares and businesses and pleasures of the world: now he is risen superior to them all. The Spirit of the Lord hath breathed upon him. He is alive from the dead. He feels desires that he once felt not. He pursues objects that he once had no enjoyment of. He no longer lives without God, without Christ, or without hope, in the world. He is concerned for his own soul and becomes affectionately solicitous about the souls of others. Frequent and earnest enquiries about “the way, and the truth, and the life,” stir within him. The followers of Jesus become in his judgment “the excellent of the earth.” To them his “goodness extendeth.” With them he “takes sweet counsel.” The life he *now* lives in the flesh is by faith of the Son of God. He is a lively branch in the living vine,—a lively stone in the living Temple. This life is both derived from Jesus Christ, and is maintained by spiritual communion with him. The believer’s resources are not in himself: “His fresh springs” are in the Lord, and “out of his fulness do we all receive.”—Such an one hath, moreover, life in *promise*. “He that believeth shall be saved.” “I give,” says the Good Shepherd, “unto my sheep, eternal life, and they shall never perish.” These are “exceeding great and precious promises” to the Christian. They are “the rod and staff” of his mind whilst passing through the wilderness of sin to the land of Holiness. Amidst his conflicts and his failures, the pulse of his spiritual being will sometimes

beat feebly : the promise of life, continued and increasing life, by Jesus Christ, supports and comforts him. Sweeter sound than music knows dwells in the Word, "He that believeth shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Cannot He who enkindles the spark of gracious principle, keep it still alive even amidst an ocean of natural corruption? Shall the promises of a faithful God not be fulfilled? Truly, "the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed : but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." And if so, may we not with propriety say, the believer hath life in *prospect*? Yes : "he that believeth on the Son hath *everlasting* life." The believer shall dwell in a Paradise, fairer and more beautiful than that of Eden ; and live, not as he may do now, a period of three or four score years, but through ever-enduring ages ; and not, as now, compassed with infirmity, oppressed with care, and liable to temporal disease and death ; but free, fully and entirely free, from sin, and therefore also fully and entirely free from sorrow, suffering, pain, and dissolution. He will enjoy all the felicities of a blessed resurrection. Because his Redeemer lives, he shall live also Every known, conceivable, or possible blessing of the Redeemer's everlasting kingdom will form the goodly heritage of his redeemed servant. Death will be "swallowed up in victory." Death temporal, death spiritual, death eternal, there shall be no more. The Grave itself shall be spoiled of its possessions. Every "friend" of Jesus "shall rise again." At his bidding "the Earth shall cast out her dead and shall no more cover her slain." The soul of the believer, purified and exalted in all its powers, shall re-occupy its once sinful, frail, and perishable, but now re-organized and glorified

tenement, and in the immediate vision of his Lord shall he realize the consummation of "that blessed hope." This will, indeed, be to possess life in a more bounteous and glorious manner than man possessed it in his unfallen capacity.

Such will be the happy consequence of believing on the Son of God.

Let us now consider

II. *The unhappy consequence of not believing on him.*

Our text tells us—and a most solemn declaration it is—"he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Here it is implied, that an unbeliever is spiritually dead; and continuing in an unbelieving state, it is declared that he shall not see life. All those Scriptures which speak of our being "quickened," "born of God," and "begotten again," imply a state of previous spiritual death. This state characterizes every man by nature: and it is only by the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit that any are raised from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. There is no impossibility to oppose our becoming rightly acquainted with our actual condition. "Judge your own selves." Which do you affect most, Self or God? Which do you prefer chiefly, God's honour or your own? At which do you most habitually aim, God's glory or your own aggrandizement? Whose will do you most readily choose to fulfil, the Lord's will or your own? Which are dearest to you, the interests and connexions of Time, or those of Eternity? With whom is your sweetest and most endearing communion held, with your Saviour or another? Whose plan of Salvation is most congenial to your wishes, the Almighty's or that of human contrivance? When feel you the most animated, when conversant with things seen

and temporal, or with things not seen as yet and eternal?—Judge ye: for where a man affects himself, and is gratified with human praise; does his own pleasure, without regard to the will and word of God; is careful only about what he shall eat and what he shall drink, and wherewithal he shall be clothed; knows nothing of communion with Christ; quarrels with the holy humbling salvation of the Gospel, and minds earthly things to the neglect of heavenly—that man most certainly sits in darkness, and dwells in the region of the shadow of death. Between him and one *naturally* dead, there is a near resemblance. For, bring one naturally dead into the splendour of noon-day brightness; he perceives not its light nor feels its warmth: offer him the most fragrant odours; he has no capacity to enjoy their fragranciness: tend to his acceptance gifts of the most rare and costly kind; he accepts them not: and why? simply because he is dead, and therefore has no eye to see, no faculty to smell, no hand to receive. And now bring one *spiritually* dead into “the light of the glorious Gospel of God;” he neither sees nor feels it. Jesus is come a Light into the world—is risen as the sun of righteousness in our moral and intellectual heaven,—and yet men love darkness rather than light, because their nature and its deeds are evil. Tell the unregenerate sinner of that “Name which is as ointment poured forth;” nothing of all you say will cheer, revive, and comfort him. Offer him “durable riches and righteousness”—the joys of faith and the rewards of grace; he will have no hand, no heart, to accept them: and why? simply because he is dead and has no gracious taste, no spiritual discernment.^a Nor has any one who is destitute of the Spirit of Christ this gracious taste

^a 1 Cor. ii. 14, and Eph. iv. 17—19.

and spiritual discernment. People may have “a name to live,” but “a *name* to live” is not life. They may nominally be in Christ, and so far be Christian; but unless they be really and practically united to him, they are none other than false and fruitless branches in the true and living vine. Whilst a man has no life in *himself*, we cannot say that he has life in *the Son of God*. In *promise*, certainly, there is no life for an unbeliever, and therefore there can be none in *prospect*. Life we had in the first Adam, and that we lost: life we may have in the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, and in none other whatsoever. There is no third Adam in whom we may obtain life. He, then, that believeth not the Son, does not, cannot, *shall not*, (says the Baptist) see life. The Holy Spirit is the *animating Soul* of that Body of which Jesus Christ is the exalted head. Where his influence is unfelt, there must be death, and where this death prevails, “the wrath of God abideth:” and this fearful wrath is the breath of the blast of His displeasure which scours the land of man’s spiritual desolation. The wrath of God, it is said, *abideth* on the unbeliever: now to *abide* it must be already on him. Shall we, then, be thought uncharitable or severe, if we say, “*He that believeth not* IS CONDEMNED ALREADY!” Shall we be deemed your enemies because we tell you the truth? If we say, “God is angry with the wicked every day;” saith not the Scripture this? Solemn as the fact is, “*the wrath of God*” is upon every unrenewed sinner. And though this expression applies, perhaps, primarily to those Jews who refused to acknowledge their Messiah in our Jesus, and to those Gentiles who despised and rejected him when he came; yet is it equally applicable to all persons in all ages who *believe not on the Son of God*. He alone that hath the Son

hath life ; he that hath not the Son hath not life : but the wrath of a holy and a justly offended God lieth on him. “ Destruction and misery are in his ways, and the way of peace he knows not.” Affecting “ the honour which cometh of man,” he has his reward in it. Choosing to walk by sight, invisible realities are lost to his perception. In love with himself, he loves not the Lord. Self-complacent, he sees not the glory or the value of a free unmerited salvation. Alive only to this world, he does but live in it to treasure up for himself wrath in another. Wrath awaits him, and death in its threefold form—its temporal pains, its spiritual maladies, and its eternal horrors, must the unbeliever suffer. The “ *shall not*” of our text is irreversible, and such will be the unhappy consequence of not believing on the Son of God.

And are these things so ? Then SEE

1. *What is the great and condemning sin of the world.* It is not murder ; it is not theft ; it is not lying, perjury, blasphemy, or sabbath-breaking ; it is not one or all of these things together : it is a sin comprehending every other sin—it is UNBELIEF. A man may be no murderer, no thief, no liar, no blasphemer, no sabbath-breaker ; and yet he may not believe on the Son of God, and, consequently, be exposed to that terrific sentence, “ *He that believeth not shall be damned.*” If a man truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, he will love him : and if any man, says Paul, *love him not, let him be Anathema Maran-atha*, that is, *accursed*. These are truly strong expressions ; but they were dictated by One too wise to err and too good to deceive. In Rev. xxi. 8, we find “ *the unbelieving*” classed with “ murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars ;”

and these together (it is declared) “shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” Awful doom! but no less just than awful. For unbelief makes the God of truth a liar, and sets at nought all his counsel; unbelief tramples on a Saviour’s blood, and scorns his sorrows, woes, and death; unbelief does despite to the Spirit of grace; counts the piety of the believer vain, and his hope visionary; encourages the wickedness of the worldly and presumptuous sinner; bars up, in short, the everlasting doors of Heaven, and wide unfolds the gates of the infernal prison. Unbelief is the grief of Heaven and the joy of Hell. And yet how few, comparatively believe with the *heart* on the Son of God! It is, we know, too common to conclude that most or all who name the Name of Christ are believers: but “*all men have not faith:*” had they, it would endear to them the Saviour, and be influential on their temper and life. Were it possible for us to prove that our Jesus never existed, and that his Gospel was “a cunningly-devised fable,” no alteration either in the sentiments or the conduct of many of his professed followers would ensue: this affords decisive evidence in favour of our position that *unbelief* is the great and condemning sin of the world. And should the public teachers of religion be silent on this momentous topic? and least of all the ministers of a Church which so accurately and repeatedly insists upon this subject? (See the xviiith Article.) With the courage and intrepidity of the Baptist would we solemnly declare;—“He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

But see

2. *What really is the Faith of the Gospel.* The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus quickens the dead in sin: thus

they are made alive unto God, and by this uniting cause and agent they become spiritually one with Christ, and Christ one with them. *Of* God are we in Christ, and *by* the Spirit faith is wrought in our hearts, and through the faith so wrought we are enabled to appropriate Jesus Christ to our use as “made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” This faith is carefully to be distinguished from the dead inoperative faith which prevails in the world, and which James describes in the second chapter of his General Epistle. It is a lively, vigorous, and influential principle—moved, as our Reformers say, through continual assistance of the Holy Spirit, to serve and please God, to keep his favour, to fear his displeasure, to continue his obedient children, shewing thankfulness again by observing or keeping his Commandments, and that freely, for true love chiefly, and not for dread of punishment or love of temporal reward, considering how clearly, without our deservings, we have received his mercy and pardon freely. Like St. Paul, the believer “dies daily” to himself, to the world, and to sin ; and lives increasingly unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The individual who has this lively faith, will be always doing some good work, which shall manifest the grace and presence of the eternal Spirit, and will not allow the ten pounds, the five, or even the one pound, to remain unoccupied. Our trust is in God’s mercy through Christ, and we have a steadfast hope of all good things to be received through him. The facts of revelation we receive, not merely *as true*, but as *holy, just, suitable, and valuable*: we love them ; delight in them ; feed upon them. Christ is our ALL : we count “all things loss” for him : take him from us, and you extinguish the sun of our system, you destroy the very source and centre of all our blessedness. We have *life* through his Name, and “though

now we *see* him not, yet *believing* in him, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." We never truly lived, till we were quickened by the power of God : and the life we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.—Such is the language of the true and really Christian Believer, and from it you may see how totally different is the faith of one "alive unto God through Jesus Christ" from that cold, heartless, influential, assent which many give so readily and yet so uselessly to the Truths of Scripture.

And now see, 3, *Who alone are secure from the Divine displeasure.* And who are they ? Let me ask, who alone were safe when "the windows of Heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up," and a deluge of water covered the highest hills and mountains of the Earth ? You know that only Noah and those who were with him in the Ark were preserved. And who of all mankind shall be secure in "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God ?" Who ? my brethren : Why, those only that are found in Christ—those only who believe with the *heart* on the Son of God. This we could prove to you from many Scriptures, but let one, in addition to our text, suffice : Turn to Acts iv. 10—12, and you will read, "By the Name of *Jesus Christ*—even by *him*, may we be saved : Neither is there Salvation in *any* other : for there is *none* other Name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Settle it, therefore, in your minds, and be it a matter of undoubted certainty with you, that unbelief in Christ will subject and expose the irreligious man to the wrath of God, and that those only will be saved from his righteous retribution who believe on the Son and live to his glory.

But see, 4, and finally, *How we may escape that wrath*. The Lord shut Noah in the ark: the Lord shuts us up to Christ. He is emphatically “the Refuge from the storm”—“the Hope set before us:” Let us fly to it. We shall dwell safely and happily in Him. See the beautiful and encouraging language of Ps. xci. 9—13. But perhaps you have no faith, you fear; or prove it difficult simply to believe? Then cry, though it be with tears, “Lord, I believe: *help thou* my unbelief.” The Lord will not reject your prayer. He has said, “Call upon me;” and he adds to his command the promise, “And thou shalt praise me.” Relieved necessity shall awaken ardent gratitude. “Ask and you shall have.” The sword that smote the Shepherd, will not smite the sheep. The bond exacted of the Surety, will not be required of the Debtor. If you do freely and earnestly repent you of your sins, desire to flee from God’s approaching judgments, and wish to be “found in Christ,” looking simply for his mercy unto eternal life; it is clear that the Holy Spirit of God *has* convinced you of your sinfulness, led you to repentance, and now invites you to believe unto the saving of your souls. “O put your trust in him, all ye people; pour out your heart before him; God is a Refuge for us.” Life in the heart is the prelude of glorious life in the body of immortality; and when the unrighteous shall fall under the displeasure of an offended Judge, you shall arise and shine as his adopted and manifested children, to celebrate his new creation, and to experience through eternity that, “Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

“So, let all thine enemies perish, O Lord; but let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his strength.”

SERMON VIII.

THE BELIEVER'S REFUGE.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 8 and 9.

— *That I may win Christ and be found in him.*

THERE is scarcely one of the Inspired Writers but may say with Hosea, “I have used similitudes.” They adopt figures of every varied kind, in illustration of spiritual and heavenly subjects. If the Canaan of Promise be described as “the glory of all lands” and as “flowing with milk and honey,” it affords a resemblance, however faint, of that “better country” to which Abraham and his believing seed had “respect,” and where flow “rivers of pleasure for evermore.” If the Lord of that better country be compared to “the Sun shining in his strength ;” it is because He is the Sun and centre of all holy minds—the source of light and life and glory to both his unfallen and redeemed creatures. If the Church, either militant or triumphant, be likened to the more sombre Moon, how forcibly does the similitude imply that—however brightly The Church may shine, she shines but with borrowed lustre, and is indebted to her Lord, “the Sun of righteousness,” for all her purity

and excellence. Whilst on his heavenward-way, how aptly may the Christian be called “a stranger and a pilgrim !” and whilst exposed to winds and storms of trial, how befitting his condition is a—Refuge ! This seemingly is the figure used by St. Paul in our text :—
“that I may win Christ and be found in him.” He had, he tells us, (in the preceding context) sheltered himself in fleshly confidence ; in the privileges of a Jew ; in the formality of a Pharisee ; in the righteousness of the Law ; in prejudiced and infatuated zeal against serious godliness, and in all the unholy pride of an unhumbled and a blinded heart : but, he had found all these things severally and together no better than “a bowing wall and a tottering fence.” They were, at best, an unsafe shelter for him. Awakened now from the dreams of his carnal ignorance, St. Paul felt the utter worthlessness of all his fancied advantages. These, though once, as he supposed, a “gain” to him, he now counted “loss for Christ.” “Yea, doubtless,” he adds, “and I count (on the most mature and calm consideration) all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord ; for whom (or for whose sake) I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, *that I may win Christ and be found in him.*”

Let us contemplate

I. The Believer's Refuge,
 And II. His Safety in it.

And I. *The Believer's* REFUGE :

We mean by the *Believer*, one that has been convinced of sin ; humbled in spirit ; shewn his helplessness ; led to acquiesce in the just judgment of a holy God, and to allow that he might have been for ever

righteously condemned for his transgressions of the Law; shewn, too, the necessity of other merits than his own to justify him, and constrained from a sense of the Divine favour and from a principle of love which the Spirit of love alone can inspire, cheerfully and gratefully, in heart and deed, to walk obediently in all the will of God:—we mean by the Believer's *Refuge*, *that* in which his soul finds rest, security, and peace. Now, in order to see more evidently the superior excellence of the Believer's Refuge, it will be proper to examine the refuges in which, unhappily, many choose to hide, rather than be found in Christ. Isaiah speaks of “refuges of lies:” these are many and various; some few of them we will notice.

There is the refuge of *wilful ignorance*. ‘We are no scholars,’ say many; ‘we never had any learning.’ Allowing they were never favoured with the means of knowledge, and are consequently no scholars: do they wish to know better? are they diligent in the use of those means of instruction which they can command? Alas! we fear not. Their pretended ignorance (for, in truth, they will commonly be found “wise in *their own eyes*, and prudent in *their own conceits*,”) is a mere excuse for negligence and indifference. In this vain subterfuge, however, they ignorantly trust, and foolishly imagine themselves to be secure. But it is a lying refuge. Wilful ignorance will not screen the sinner in the day of God's visitation. The one talent must be accounted for as well as the five talents and the two. The “wisdom of this world” cannot make its possessor wise unto salvation, nor is it essentially necessary to our knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. We may be pious Christians without being learned scholars.

There is again the refuge of *carnal ease*. Many people live as if the body alone were to be provided for,

and the indulgence of the animal senses constituted the sum total of their enjoyment. For this they will "rise early and late take rest." So that their "corn and wine and oil increase," and the temporal wants of themselves and of their families be supplied, they are little solicitous about "treasures in heaven" or provision for their immortal souls. I mean not to say that a man ought not even carefully to "provide for those of his own house;" did he not do so he would be "worse than an infidel:" but I do say that the carnal ease in which many pass the days of the years of their earthly pilgrimage, is ruinous to their best and eternal interests. They cry "Peace, when there is no peace." Their peace is like that deadly stillness which those who have sailed some distant seas, inform us always precedes a furious and destructive storm. "Soul," say they, "take thine ease:" but "when they say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them." "Tremble, then, ye that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones," for your state ill comports with the watchful care, the prayerful diligence, the laborious love, the patient hope, of a child of grace. The refuge of carnal ease shall be proved a lie.

Others shelter themselves in *worldly pleasure*. This is the refuge of many, and particularly of Youth. They are athirst for happiness;—the world first powerfully presents itself to their view: forsaking "the Fountain of living waters," they endeavour to satiate their desires at the polluted streams of sensual mirth. They deem Religion a source of gloom and melancholy. The sober joy, the rejoicing hope, the tender seriousness, of the Christian, is any thing but pleasurable and desirable in their view. But pleasure, of whatever kind it be, unblessed with the presence and the smile of a reconciled Father in Christ, is vain and delusive. It may

seem a flower to be innocently gathered on our way through life ; but it conceals a thorn. It may seem a refuge fair and beautiful to behold, but it is a refuge bordering close upon wretchedness and woe. "Who hath woe?" asks Solomon: "who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of the eyes? They," he answers, "that tarry long at the wine." And "woe unto them that laugh now," says a greater than Solomon, "for ye shall mourn and weep." And "she that liveth in pleasure," adds an Apostle of Jesus Christ, "is dead while she liveth." Surely, then, the thoughtless mirth in which so many live, and which can only issue in fruitless mourning and sorrow, can be no safe retreat for a man's immortal soul.

There are, too, refuges of a still more ensnaring and delusive kind than those we have already noticed. There is one which, from the peculiarity of its nature, we may denominate the sinner's "stronghold"—I mean, *self-righteousness*. Nothing has the Minister of Christ so much to contend with in his people as a disposition to seek, to affect, to approve, and to justify *self*. Self is man's golden god, and selfishness the worship that he renders to it. Even after we are regenerate, this corrupt propensity of our nature remains. Selfishness prevails in all we do or think or say. But it is the allowance and indulgence of it that endangers the soul's security. When men are "whole and need not a Physician," the Physician's skill will be lightly valued. When men are satisfied with themselves, there will be little desire to "win Christ and to be found in him." Such as are so satisfied, are "blind;" they feed "on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned them aside, so that they cannot deliver their souls, or say, Is there not a lie in our right hand?" This self-complacency it is

Satan's great endeavour to induce and to perpetuate ; because he knows full well its mischievous effects, and how certainly " God resisteth the proud and beholdeth them afar off." The resort of multitudes, alas ! it is ; but like every other refuge of man's devising, it will be found " a house builded on the sand" and whose ruin must inevitably be " great."

One other refuge we will notice ere we contemplate that of the believer's—*a hasty inconsiderate profession of religion*. There are persons, who deem a profession of godliness reputable. Some have sinister and worldly ends to answer by becoming professedly pious : others, again, wish to ingratiate themselves with their minister, or religious acquaintance : hence the language and profession of religion is assumed. This is their refuge. But follow them into their families ; go with them into their closets, and what may you discover ? You may often find all the unholy tempers, the angry looks, and the sinful negligences of the natural man. Now, could a good tree bring forth such corrupt fruit ? Their profession is unsound. They are " men-pleasers." Their religion is not the religion of the Holy Ghost, nor is their faith the faith of the Redeemer's people. They make them, indeed, a wall ; but they " daub it with untempered mortar." And as a poor mud-walled cottage can ill endure the rains and winds of Winter, so no more will a false profession of religion endure the righteous scrutiny of God, or the fiery trial of the Judgment Day.

And now opposed to the foregoing "refuges of lies," is the Believer's Refuge. And what is it ? It is CHRIST—*Christ* in his person, *Christ* in his love, *Christ* in his birth, life, work, death, resurrection, ascension, session at the right hand of his eternal Father, his mediatorial office there, and his reappearing in glorious

majesty, the reigning Lord and triumphant King of his saints: "that I may win *Christ*," says St. Paul, "and be found in him." Winning Christ and being found in him must doubtless import somewhat more than a mere knowledge and profession of Christianity. The very expressions to "win Christ" and be "found in him," imply a lively apprehension of danger and an earnest desire to escape from it. They befit the condition of an awakened sinner, and his need of comfort. "It is written in the Prophets, All thy children shall be taught of God;" (See Isa. liv. 13. Mic. iv. 2.) and there is *no man* that hath heard and learned of the Father, but cometh unto Christ. In all times and in all places, Christ has been the refuge of every Heaven-born and Heaven-directed soul. This the whole inspired volume testifies. To Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, was Jesus Christ the promised "Seed." These all died in the faith of Christ, and found rest unto their souls in him. "Strangers and pilgrims" here, they sought another and a Heavenly country: and as they journeyed through the wastes of time, their faith became to them "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Describing the glory of Emmanuel, Isaiah says, "Behold a King shall reign in righteousness, and Princes shall rule in judgment; and A MAN shall be as an hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."^a And lest we should be mistaken in the object of our trust, and put that confidence in a creature which the high and lofty One claims as his exclusive homage, the Prophet declares this refuge from the storm, this shadow from the heat, to

^a Isaiah xxxii. 1, 2.

be—GOD, JEHOVAH, the LORD OF HOSTS.^a Joel also writes, “*The LORD will be the hope of his people:*”^b that is, if you observe the marginal reading of your Bible, “*JEHOVAH will be the harbour or place of repair*” to his believing children. Then is the Believer’s Refuge both God and Man—‘perfect God and perfect Man; of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting: equal to the Father as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood: who, although he be God and Man; yet is he not two, but one Christ:’ and as the Christ of God, he is “the strong tower of defence,” “the quiet habitation and the sure resting place” of every one that really believes in him. “By two immutable things (his counsel and his oath) in which it was impossible for God to lie, we have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the Hope set before us in the Gospel.”^c As under the Jewish Dispensation, any one fearful and apprehensive of danger, “laid hold on the horns of the altar,” so under the dispensation of the Gospel, the alarmed and guilty sinner lays hold on Him whom the altar typified, and finds in Christ a defence from all he deserves and dreads. NOT (let me observe) that even Christ, in all the exalted nature of his person and in all the excellence of his mediatorial work, is usually the *first* resort of a convicted sinner. No: such is the unholy and miserable self-love of our fallen nature, that we commonly fly to our tears, repentances, prayers, duties, or any thing for security from apprehended wrath, rather than to Jesus Christ. But all these things, equally with wilful ignorance, carnal ease, worldly pleasure, self-righteousness, or a mere profession of godliness, are ultimately found to be worthless and unkindly refuges. There is

^a Is. xxv. 1—4.^b Ch. iii. 10.^c Heb. vi. 18.

no place in them where the aching heart or the foot of hope may rest. The gracious Testifier of Jesus leads whom He teaches to see and feel that 'other refuge there is none,' save Jesus and him crucified—Jesus and him alive again—Jesus and him "*over all, God blessed for ever*"—Jesus and him coming speedily to evince his kingly power, in the destruction of his enemies and the redemption of his people. Weary of "going about to establish his own righteousness," the Believer learns at length meekly and gratefully to submit himself to the righteousness of God. Self, indeed, still lives ; but he "that is Christ's, hath crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts ;" and though not at present dead, the flesh is dying. The Christian *allows* not boasting : he would rather that every lofty imagination within him were brought low ; and he desires to be nothing, that Christ may be all in all. Foregoing every other ground of confidence, the language of his heart is—" *That I may win Christ :*" too long have I stopped short of him : too long have I been resting in "lying vanities"—hovering in uncertainty and doubt at a distance from my Saviour-God, as if he were unable or unwilling to befriend and succour me ; but now I perceive his graciousness and I admire his loveliness. O, let me win Christ and be found in him ! Jesus invites the weary and heavy-laden to himself ; a weary heavy-laden heart is mine, and therefore, Lord, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee : my soul thirsteth after thee in a barren and a dry land where no water is."

Thus, "the Munition of rocks" becomes the Believer's strength and salvation. He wins Christ and is found in him. What are the great and peculiar excellencies of his Refuge, we cannot adequately conceive or describe : one that had been taught the Truth by immediate revelation from Jesus Christ himself, declares

them to be “unsearchable.” His name is “Wonderful,” and wonderful are all his works and ways. He inherits uncreated glory by right of essential Deity. Knowledge and power are his in infinite degrees. His kingdom is divinely spiritual, pure, and blissful. Every trembling penitent who applies to him in the day of his humiliation, Jesus is “mighty to save.” In short, “there is no end of his greatness;” and all which a sinner could wish to find in a Saviour may be found in Christ. Not that a Believer apprehends directly and at once all that for which he is apprehended of God in Christ Jesus: no; this would be to exceed the experience even of Paul himself, who only anticipated his crown in “that day.”^a Often, it may be, years of our spiritual life elapse before we can cordially and unhesitatingly “rejoice in Christ Jesus.” Every child of God, however, will gradually be led to do so, and to the view of his enlightened understanding new discoveries of his Saviour’s person, love, birth, death, and every excellence will be made as he needs, and is able to bear them. Christ becomes, as St. Peter remarks, “precious,” or rather *preciousness* itself, to “them that believe.” They would not but be “found in him” for a thousand worlds. He is more to them than the city of refuge was to the man-slayer in Israel. You probably recollect that in the division of Canaan by Moses and Joshua, six cities were selected as cities of refuge for any one who killed his neighbour unawares and hated him not in time past.^b The roads to these places were required to be well kept up, and on posts by the way was written in characters so distinguishable that “whoso ran might read”—“*To your Refuge.*” Would, then, one of these six cities be dear as a place of resort

^a 2 Tim. iv. 8.

^b Num. xxxv.

to the man-slayer? Infinitely dearer is Christ to those who are found in him. No avenger of blood may dare to touch any one who is "accepted in the Beloved." The *life* of the High Priest of our profession secures the Believer from molestation: His *death* only procures him farther enlargement and freedom.^a He wins more and more of Christ continually; he is found dependant on Him more and more simply, and longs with all that 'spiritually eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, to dwell in Christ,' "not having his own righteousness, which is of the Law," for any ground of hope or personal safety, "but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Such is the Believer's Refuge: and from contemplating his *Refuge*, let us proceed to contemplate

II. *His SAFETY in it.*

When the Almighty "shall lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; when the hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-places" of human contrivance and worldly wisdom, the Believer's will be found "a *quiet* habitation and a *sure* resting place;" whilst ignorance, carnal ease, self-love, worldly pleasure, and a mere nominal christianity, crumble into the dust of shame and the ruin of despair, the Believer's Refuge will bear every trial, and prove a safe retreat amidst 'the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds.' Hath he enemies? They may *assail* his citadel, but they shall not *take* it: He is "kept (or *garrisoned*, as the original imports) by the power of God through faith unto salvation."^b Are his enemies *mighty*? "He that dwelleth in the secret

^a Jos. xx. 6.

^b 1 Pet. i. 5.

place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the *All-mighty*." Doth "this present evil *world*" allure him? Christ hath overcome the world, and by faith the Christian overcomes it too. While passing through it and contending with it, the promise—"Whoso overcometh shall sit down with me on my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on his throne"—will sound sweetly in the Believer's ear. "Fears within and fightings without," demand perpetual vigilance and watchfulness: but "strong in the Lord," the believer wages a successful warfare, and the conqueror's palm and robe, in glorious prospect, ever and anon cheer and animate his hope. Worldly cares of a necessary and a lawful kind, it may be, frequently engage the attention and occupy the time of a good man; but "These, will he say, are not my divinities."^a He will not allow himself to be wholly absorbed in them, nor say, when disengaged from them, "What have I more?" He wants but a tent in a world the fashion of which passeth away. He has no *abiding* place below, and will ever feelingly be saying with Israel's sweet Psalmist—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul," or like the beloved Apostle, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly."

Does the *flesh* lust against the spirit? Does the Believer feel—not merely the frailty, but—the depravity of his nature? He knows that "in Christ was no sin," and he has the promise of his Lord that "sin shall not have *dominion* over *him*." "Though this infection of nature doth remain even in them that are regenerate, yet is there no condemnation to them that believe and are baptized."^b The Believer is safe in his Refuge. In the pure and now glorified human nature

^a Jud. xviii. 42.

^b Art. ix.

of Jesus Christ, he sees what one day he shall be himself. Even now his sin is forgiven in its *guilt*, and destroying, if not perfectly destroyed, in its *power*. No Jebusite *allowedly* lives in the land of his experience, however obstinately he may retain his hold in it. In the atoning blood of his Redeemer, the Believer has a "fountain opened for his sin and for his uncleanness" wherein he may daily and hourly wash. In his Redeemer, he has an Advocate and a Priest to "bear the iniquity of his holy things." Sometimes, perhaps, he "groans, being burdened;" but he looks unto the Lord and is lightened. So severe, it may be, are occasionally the contentions between the opposing principles of flesh and spirit, of sin and holiness, that he can only breathe the sorrows of his heart in the "*O wretched man that I am*" of St. Paul's experience. "Who, asks the struggling Christian, shall deliver me from the body of sin and death?" He asks not in vain: the Spirit who excites such earnest enquiries in his bosom, leaves him not comfortless, but enables him, perhaps in the moment of his greatest extremity, to say, "*I thank God who delivers me through Jesus Christ.*" Thus he triumphs with thanksgiving. God "*GIVETH us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" Believing, notwithstanding all our remaining imperfections, we rejoice—rejoice in hope, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Our very conflicts endear our hope; they do but add to the splendour of our brightening prospects. Sweet, truly, is the thought, 'I shall one day be like unto my glorious Lord. In my flesh shall I see God: and, when I see him, I shall be like him.'

But, does *Satan* harass and trouble the believer? Hath he to "wrestle *not* with flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness

(or *wicked spirits*) in high places? He knows that his Lord and Saviour was "tempted of the Devil," and that now from a fellow-feeling Jesus Christ is disposed to "succour them that are tempted." The Devils are "subject unto Christ." They can do no more than he permits them. They crouch to him. And soon may the believer expect the Angel that is to come down from Heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand, to bind that old serpent which is the Devil and Satan.^a The saints in glory "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony;" by the same sure and unfailing means shall those who are yet maintaining the good fight of faith, overcome him too. The armies of the Redeemer's Israel *must* triumph ultimately. Their God is their strength: and presently will He call them to put their feet upon the necks of their enemies, and award to them the glories of the land of promise. (See Joshua x. 24, 25.)

But, whilst thus contending with the *world*, the *flesh*, and *Satan*, the Believer, possibly, becomes sometimes "weary in the greatness of his way." "LEST he be weary and faint in his mind," he is commanded to "look unto Jesus," and to "consider him that endured the cross, despising the shame." In looking unto Jesus and considering *his* cross, the Christian's burden becomes easy and tolerable. If he "walk in darkness"—darkness so total that he has "no light," he is still privileged to "trust in the Name of the Lord and to stay upon his God." If he be perplexed or troubled about any affair of moment; ignorant how to act, or unknowing what conduct most judiciously to pursue; he may "commit his way unto the Lord," and if it be

^a Rev. xx. 1, 2.

really beneficial for him, "the Lord will bring it to pass." If, in a time he is not aware, the Believer be overtaken by some unthought-of calamity: "The Name of his Lord is a strong tower; he runneth into it and is safe." The storms which well-nigh overwhelm others, scarcely affect him. "His heart standeth fast, trusting in the Lord." "No plague comes nigh his dwelling." He "abides safely." Whilst other refuges are proved to be false and insecure, Jesus is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Whilst many persons pass their days in time-consuming, soul-destroying follies, the Believer is satisfied with the glorious sufficiency of Christ. He finds a fulness of every good in Jesus:—a fulness of mercy, a fulness of love, a fulness of strength, a fulness of life, a fulness of glory: and "out of his fulness do we all receive." Here are rich "provisions by the way." The Christian Pilgrim lives upon them. Still that he may "win Christ and be found in him" is his prevalent desire. He hastens by anticipation to the time when he shall be satiated with fatness and replenished with goodness, when he shall hunger no more neither thirst any more, and he shall be "*saved IN THE LORD with an everlasting salvation.*"

Such, then, beloved, is the Believer's Refuge, and His Safety in it. I would now SAY to all who believe among you, Abide in your Refuge, and Welcome others to it.

And 1. *Abide in your Refuge.* "*Abide in me,*" says Jesus Christ himself to his disciples. Unless the man-slayer tarried within the bounds of the city, he became exposed to the sword of the avenger. If then he valued his life and wished to preserve it, he would surely suffer

no trifle to induce him to wander from his retreat. Imitate the man-slayer in this particular: Abide in Christ. Nor deem our exhortation needless and unseasonable. If Man could be beguiled when innocent, much more may he be deceived when fallen and depraved. Now, "I fear, lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so *your* minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Beware, then, of those things that would corrupt you, and make you any other than simple, humble, holy, followers of the Lamb. Nature will be nature still, nor will "the flesh" be other than fleshly and carnal in its propensities, till the morning of the resurrection dawn upon the darkness of the tomb, and the body be built anew from the dust. Believers have especially to beware of slothful ease, unwatchfulness, and spiritual pride. Even David was not exempt from these evils. "My mountain, said he, standeth strong; and I shall never be moved:"^a God hid his face from him and he was troubled. He said it, he tells us, in his "prosperity;" and it was his prosperity that injured his simplicity. Humbled, however, for his fault, David presently prays—"In THEE, O Lord, do I put my trust: Be THOU my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me."^b "Let him, therefore, among *you*, that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Beware of every thing like presumptuous confidence. How experienced soever you may be, there will come no period in your life of faith, when you may conclude that you have attained all you can attain. This you can only do in the resurrection-state and glory. Never will you spiritually exist without Christ and a believing union with him. You came to him indeed only as you were drawn:

^a Ps. xxx. 7.

^b Ps. xxxi. 1, 2.

You abide in him only as you are “preserved in him :”^a nevertheless, this does not supersede the necessity of your “keeping *yourselves* in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Your Lord’s command is—“Watch :” and we cannot think He would have enjoined watchfulness so solemnly and repeatedly had there been no particular occasion for it. In watchfulness, therefore, and in all befitting duties, be emulous to adorn the Doctrine of God your Saviour. Let us see that you are in Christ and partakers of his Spirit, by the fruits of righteousness which you bear. This is the test whereby your Christianity must be proved. For “he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.—But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected : *HEREBY know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, EVEN AS he walked.*”

2. *Welcome others to your Refuge.* Our experience of the Divine goodness must be small and our enjoyment of the Divine favour weak and languid, if a fellow-sinner’s penitence do not fill our hearts with joy and thankfulness. What ! shall angels that never knew redeeming mercy look down from their high abode and watch with joyous gratulation the progress of a soul returning to its God ; and we, the subjects of redemption, feel no, or at best but a cold and partial, interest in an event so gladsome ? I have observed with regret, in persons whose piety we could not doubt, a shyness and reserve towards others who had not, it might be, attained to their knowledge or to their enjoyment, and consequently were timid and retiring, not at all to be

^a Jude, ver. 1 and 21.

commended.—O, it should not content us to be secure ourselves : our desire and prayer should be that others also may be saved : and to our desire and prayer should be added kind and earnest endeavours to do them good. With sacred joy should you hail and bid “God speed” every one whom you see “enquiring his way to Zion with his face thither-ward.” Like Laban you may say, “*Come in, thou blessed of the Lord : why tarriest thou without ?*” Thus by your “good conversation in Christ,” enquirers will be instructed ; anxious sinners will be encouraged ; mourners will be comforted ; Jesus, your Lord, will be glorified ; and with the whole family of the redeemed in heaven and in earth, you will rejoice in one common but all-and-infinitely glorious salvation ; enjoy the same security in your blessed Refuge, and unite in the same song of Worthiness to the Lamb, with hearts and tongues in sweet and delightful unison to all eternity.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirits ! Amen.”

SERMON IX.

FORGETFULNESS OF GOD: ITS EVIL.

PSALM L. 22.

Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

FORGET God!—is this possible? What! when we see his “eternal power and godhead” in all things above us and about us? If we look up to the Heavens, “the Heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work.” If we look around us here, “the earth is full of his goodness.” God’s is the sun that makes our day; his the moon that cheers our night. Because he is merciful and true, the varying seasons of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, do not fail. He it is who clothes our valleys and hills with fruitfulness; at whose bidding the Heavens drop down their dew, and the earth yields her increase. He, more than all, it is who pitied man in his low estate, loved us when we were sinful, and saved us when we were lost. He it is who gave an only-begotten Son to

be “a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of his people Israel ;” who hath given us moreover the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and therewith his Holy Spirit to unfold its mysteries, and to dispose our naturally unwilling hearts to receive its truths. And is it possible that men can forget this kind and gracious God?—forget him, too, amidst accumulated wonders and surpassing goodness? Yes: certain it is men do forget him, and forget him, also, to an extent they are little aware of. Such characters are described in the Psalm before us. They may, indeed, take God’s covenant in their mouth; but they hate instruction, and cast his word behind them. When they see a thief, they consent to thief with him, and are partakers with the adulterer in his crimes. They give their mouth to evil, and their tongue frameth deceit. They sit and speak against their brother, and slander their own mother’s son. These things they do, and a long-suffering God keeps silence. Because he forbears to avenge the wrongs they do him, they think him altogether such an one as themselves—regardless alike of human actions and dispositions; and because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, they think, forsooth, it will not be executed at all. But “I will reprove them, saith the Lord, and set their doings in order before their eyes.” And now succeeds the solemn caution in our text—“Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.” Forgetfulness of God is the source of their wickedness, and should this sinful conduct be persisted in, it will induce a sorer punishment than all created power could remedy.

Now here are three things for our consideration:—

I. An Evil :

II. Its Punishment :

And III. A Means whereby to correct the evil and to avoid the punishment.

There is

I. An *Evil* :—

The Evil spoken of in our text is—*forgetfulness of God*. That many persons do forget God is, unhappily, too easy to be proved. Some are so foolish as to say, “There is no God.” Pharaoh-like, they proudly ask, “Who is the Lord that I should obey him?” Such particularly are atheists. They would rather “the Lord God of Israel should cease from before them.” But you will find upon enquiry, that they are “become corrupt and are abominable in their doings,” and that consequently they *wish* there was no God ; and hence in the alarm and folly of their hearts, they try to persuade themselves there is none. Such persons may be said willingly to forget God : they *like not* to retain him in their knowledge.

Many, again, there are, who, though they admit there is a God, yet they cannot be said to believe in the God of Revelation. The God of the Bible is a just, pure, and holy being ; loving righteousness and hating iniquity ; approachable only by a Mediator, and worshipped “in vain” unless worshipped “in Spirit and in truth :” their God is “a God all mercy,” easily appeased when offended, indulgent to human frailty, and, in short, “such an one as themselves” and as their own depraved imaginations choose to make him. The altar of such characters must be inscribed “*To the unknown God*,” for it cannot possibly be said that they remember or revere “the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.”

Others there are who allow that “doubtless there is a God that judgeth the earth,” who rules his rational and intelligent creatures by a law “holy, and just, and good :” and yet perhaps through the whole of their lives they have paid no respect to the word, the will, or authority of their Sovereign Creator. With regard, for instance, to the *Sabbath*,—how many have attained, it may be, to manhood and to old age who have never yet kept a single Sabbath-day holy ! “Thou shalt keep my Sabbath, and reverence my sanctuary : I am the Lord.” And again, “Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.” And yet multitudes there are who make little or no distinction between the Sabbath and another day. They can cheerfully even trouble and inconvenience themselves to “find their own ways and to do their own pleasure on God’s holy day ;” but where is their readiness to do the will and pleasure of the Almighty ? To see a friend or to settle an account, some will travel several miles on the Sabbath : whereas, they cannot visit the House of Prayer though it be but a few yards from their door. Must not such persons forget God ?

How common is *Swearing* ! Upon the least provocation, about things the most trivial and unimportant, and often without any provocation whatever, foul and impious oaths will fill the mouths of men. We can hardly pass the streets of our towns and villages, but our ears are assailed with profane and terrifying expressions. Men seem proud to resemble the Devil and to use the language of Demons. It is not in custom or fashion to change the turpitude of moral guilt. Can the swearer be said to remember God ? Rather, does he not impiously forget *who* hath said, “*Swear not at all ?*”

How frequently, too, do we hear *the holy name profaned* ! The name which is above every name—the name which all the hosts of Heaven hallow and adore—

the name at which every knee shall bow, is used as familiarly and irreverently in the conversation of many people as any word whatever. Now God has (and for reasons, doubtless, wise and good) forbidden the vain mention of His name; and He has, moreover, solemnly declared He will not hold him guiltless who presumes to do so. Then, surely, those who take the name of the Lord their God in vain, must be forgetful of Him.

How eagerly by many are the pleasures, the fashions, and the favour of the world desired and sought! God has said, "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." Now, where the mind is devoted to mere trifling pursuits, is it possible that God can be supremely loved and gratefully remembered? People excuse, indeed, their worldliness, and say, 'Where is the harm of a little innocent amusement? Is it not allowable and proper to enjoy ourselves?' Yes, truly, we reply, it is so: but, nothing is innocent, nothing is allowable, nothing is right, in which God is forgotten, or in which God's authority is contemned, His glory is not designed, and His blessing cannot be expected. And you will very generally find that those who are the most worldly and most conformed in disposition and habit to the ways and customs of the world, are the most forgetful of God.

But further: there are many who wake from the slumbers of the night, and go forth to their daily occupations, without bowing their knees in humble adoration of their Almighty Guardian and Protector. And when the day closes and the shades of night once more invite them to repose, they do not think in whom they live, or by whom they have been strengthened for labour, and on whose bounty they hourly and momentarily exist. Of this careless forgetfulness of himself the Lord complains, saying by his servant Isaiah, "*The ox knoweth*

his owner, and the ass his master's crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider." May not the Lord justly ask, "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?" Could we forget a Father whom we loved, and whose smile was both the propelling motive and the approving plaudit of our obedience?

Again, how many Masters and Parents are there who never call their children and their households round them for the worship of the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of all their mercies! In many families God seems totally forgotten. In others he is acknowledged just *once* a-week:—some will repeat the Catechism or it may be read a chapter and say a prayer on a *Sabbath* evening, and on no other occasion through the week. But, this manifests a very reluctant remembrance of God, if *he* deems it any remembrance of himself at all. He says in Deut. vi. 6 and 7.—"These words which I command thee shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and *when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*" Must not God, then, most certainly be much forgotten by those who do not attempt his worship, nor read his Word, nor endeavour practically to enforce it, statedly and constantly, in their families?

Prayer, too, before and after meals, in many houses is lamentably omitted. Many sit down to their meals, and partake of those things which a bounteous God gives them richly to enjoy, without the slightest acknowledgment of his goodness. Every comfort they possess cometh down in gracious donation from above: but, alas! no thanksgiving goes back to Heaven in return. Some indeed mutter a few words over their board, but there is plainly no heartfelt remembrance of God in the service.

There is, commonly, no mention whatever of the Mediator, by the purchase of whose blood alone any mercy is bestowed upon us. The lips of many appear to freeze while uttering the name of Jesus. They shrink from the utterance of it—and instead of it will say—‘Thank Providence or thank Heaven,’ ashamed, in truth, to acknowledge their Redeemer. Whereas, the precept of the Gospel is, “Whether ye *eat* or *drink*, or whatsoever ye do, do all *in the name of the Lord Jesus*.” He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that hath sent him. And since it is the Father’s will that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour himself, those who do not so must forget God and treat his will with indifference and contempt.

Still nearer to your bosoms and to your conduct might we come : but we think it must be sufficiently apparent to you that forgetfulness of God is an awfully prevalent evil. Suffer me however to ask, do not many forget God even in his more immediate presence and service ? In the great congregation, it may, we fear, be said, “God is not in *all* their thoughts.” Many attend their church merely because it is Sunday, or because others do so, or because they have, perhaps, nothing just now to call them elsewhere, or because it is one part of their “will-worship” and self-righteousness to keep (as they say) their Church. But, in all this God may be forgotten. How many feel reluctant and ashamed to *kneel* while we pray ! Wandering eyes often betray a sad vacuity of mind. The whole deportment manifests forgetfulness of God, and the Sabbath terminates without the blessing of the Sabbath’s Lord.

And shall we pretend that there is little or no sin in this forgetfulness of the glorious and eternal God ? How does that God himself regard it ?—How, I would know, would *you* regard the forgetfulness of a child

whom you had tenderly nourished, or a friend to whom you had shewn great and manifold kindnesses? Would it not grieve you? Would you not feel it to be an evil?—Then, be assured, “an evil and a bitter thing it is thus to sin against God,” nor can our forgetfulness of him be otherwise than offensive. This will fully appear whilst we consider

II. Its *Punishment* :—

“Now, consider this, ye that forget God, *lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*” The expressions “*tear you in pieces,*” and “*none to deliver,*” forcibly imply that the Punishment which God will inflict on those who forget him, will be *sudden, terrible, and without remedy.*

Those who forget God may commonly be observed to be very thoughtlessly secure. They resemble those whom Gideon smote.^a This security is their danger. “When they shall say, Peace and safety, then *sudden* destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape.” In Hosea xiii. 6. the Lord traces Israel’s forgetfulness of him to pride and exaltation of heart, and says, “Therefore, I will be unto them as a lion : as a leopard by the way will I observe them : I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion.” Now, how unexpectedly does a beast of prey seize upon its hapless victim ! Unconscious, perhaps, of any danger, it finds itself in the power of an enemy mighty to destroy. Such seems to be the figure used by the Spirit in our text to convey to us some idea of the suddenness

^a Jud. viii. 11.

of the wicked man's visitation. Little did the children of Bethel, when they mocked Elisha, expect to be torn in pieces :^a and little do many that forget God conceive how soon "a sudden destruction from the Lord" may come upon them.

It is implied also that their Punishment will be *terrible*. God can make his enemies a terror to themselves.^b He can appoint terror over them and within them. He can himself—though to his believing people he is the God of love, the God of all grace, and the Father of mercies—yet can he become a terror to those who forget him. Thus, instead of the smiles, "the terrors of God do set themselves in array against them." Ofttimes "they are utterly consumed with terrors." What appalling terribleness is conveyed in the idea of being torn in pieces by a lion, a leopard, or a bear ! How surpassingly terrible, then, must be the wrath of an offended God ! Now, with the wicked God is angry every day : and though he may forbear for a season to destroy them, yet do they only live to heap up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God. And what a *wrench* is the separation of the careless and ungodly from the world by Death ! O might they live ! but, no : a forgotten God will now remind them of himself. Where the groans of expiration cease, the howlings of despair commence.

But the bitterest ingredient of the Punishment remains to be told—it will be *without remedy*. There will be *none to deliver from it*. No, NONE to deliver. Not the *Lord Jesus Christ* : for he says, "Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof ; I also

^a 2 Kings ii. 24.

^b Jer. xx. 4.

will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh : When your fear cometh as a desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you : Then shall they call upon me ; but I will not answer : they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." In this world only can deliverance from wrath be obtained : beyond it there is no Saviour. Nor can *Angels* save us. They acquiesce in their Sovereign's pleasure, and approve the sentence which he passes on all them who forget God. "*True and righteous are thy judgments,*" forms part of the song of the angels and the redeemed in glory.—Nor can *men* deliver from the wrath to come. In Psalm xlix. 7 and 8, we read, "*None of them can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him : for the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever.*" You know one is represented as applying to a redeemed saint for ease and comfort amidst his woeful torments ; but the application was made in vain. He could not obtain even "*a drop of water to cool his tongue ;*" much less could he be redeemed from his deserved punishment. His punishment was remediless. You may hear indeed of some who invoke the saints—pray *to* the dead *for* the dead ; but it is "a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but is rather repugnant to the Word of God." It is indeed a doctrine befitting Romanism, or "the Man of Sin ; but it is utterly at variance with sober truth (Matt. iv. 10. for instance) and therefore to be entirely rejected and condemned by all whose rule of faith and conduct is *the Bible*. Thus it appears how truly there are "NONE to deliver." "The calamity of the wicked cometh suddenly ; suddenly shall they be broken, and that *without remedy*."

And now to confirm more fully what has been advanced, allow me just to refer you to a text which contains in substance all that we have said. In Jer. xxiii. 39 and 40, we read, “ Therefore I, even I, will utterly forget you ; and I will forsake you and cast you out of my presence : And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you and a perpetual shame that shall not be forgotten.” Observe these words : *I, even I*, will do it, saith the Lord. And what will he do ? *Forget* them that forget him : and not forget them only, but *utterly* forget them :—*forsake* them ; and not forsake them merely, but *cast them out of his presence* : not bring a reproach upon them which the lapse of time shall wipe away ; but an *everlasting* reproach and a shame of *perpetual* endurance *that shall not be forgotten*. What affecting declarations are these ! How should they quicken our attention

III. To a *Means* whereby to correct the evil and to avoid the punishment.

The means our text prescribes is—*Consideration* : “ Now, *consider* this,” and do so, “ LEST I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.” The levity or inconsiderateness of men proves their ruin. “ They *consider not* that they do evil.” “ They *consider not* in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness,” saith the Lord by Hosea the prophet. “ Now, therefore, he farther adds, CONSIDER.”

And 1. I would say, consider *yourselves*. Call home to you your vagrant thoughts. Fix them with scrutinizing earnestness upon your state ; your character ; your motives, hopes, and aims. See what manner of spirit you are of. Enquire whether you remember God at all ; in what way you remember him, and whether

your remembrance of him be pleasant, affectionate, and kind. Thus sweet were the Psalmist's meditations on God. Low and unprofitable must be your religion, if your thoughts of Him be cold, distant, and reserved. You may judge of your spiritual state by your taste or distaste of heavenly things. Then "*know this, and consider it in thine heart.*"

Consider 2, your *obligations* to the Author of all being and existence. How manifold, how various, how great, are his benefits ! Before you were born he thought of you, and since you were born he has been unweariedly mindful of you. By mercies daily multiplied upon you, does he beseech you to be reconciled to him. He commendeth his love to our consideration ; and lest we should doubt his loving-kindness and truth, he "spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all." The Lord has, moreover, set a Watchman over you, to warn you of the danger inseparably connected with forgetfulness of God, and that *lest* he should tear you in pieces, and the sword of his justice should be bathed in your blood. Then *think of these things*, and consider how surely the very "goodness of God," unless it lead you to repentance, will increase and aggravate your condemnation. "*Consider how great things* he hath done for you."

Consider 3, *how lamentably God is forgotten in the World*. How few comparatively remember him at all ! How few of those who remember him, think of him cordially and gratefully ! Because, then, so many "live without God in the World," it should be your determination to "remember him in his ways," and habitually to "consider the operations of his hands."—Do some fools say in their heart, There is no God ? Ask them, How came the Universe into being ? How they themselves exist ; and whether but for the corruption of

their hearts and the abominations of their lives, they would not most readily allow the existence of a great Supreme?—Do any doubt whether the Bible be a Revelation of the Divine Will? Ask them how far they have examined its pretences to credibility and to the truth of its statements. See whether but for the holiness of its precepts, the sublimity of its doctrines, the tremendousness of its sanctions, they would not believe and admit the Bible's verity. It is the *heart*, not the *head*, that makes our infidels.—Is the Sabbath by many unobserved, and its means neglected? Do you hallow it, and give the *Day*, not merely some two or three hours of it, to devotional and religious duties.—Is swearing common? Let oaths and blasphemies, “foolish jestings and talking,” share no part of your conversation; “let them not be *once named among you*.” Whenever you hear an oath, reprove it; and whilst the swearer prays to be ‘damned,’ do you lift up your heart to God for his salvation.—Is the Lord's Name profaned? O let the mention of that “great and fearful Name” fill you with solemn awe and reverential dread.—Is this present World the *all* of the majority of its population? Affect ye a better portion: be *Mary's* part *your* choice. “Come out from among” its deluded votaries, “and be separated” from their ways, their vanities, and pursuits. Prefer a Church to a Theatre,—communion with God, to the “filthy conversation of the wicked.” What are the pleasures of sense and sin, to the enjoyments of Piety? Earthly pleasures may have, “*as it were*, crowns on their heads:” but they *certainly* have “stings in their tails.”—Do many live without prayer either in their chambers secretly alone with God, or in their houses amidst their families? Do you “enter into your closets, and shut to the door and pray to your Father which seeth in secret,” and let “the voice of praise and

thanksgiving" be heard also in your dwellings. Wherever your tent may be pitched, rear, as Abraham reared, an altar to the Lord. When lying down and rising up ; when partaking of the social meal or engaged in necessary and lawful labour—"in *all* your ways acknowledge him," and consider how you may best promote his glory.

But, finally, consider *the consequence* that must necessarily ensue from a sinful forgetfulness of God. We have before endeavoured to shew you this : do not forget how the Wicked shall be torn in pieces. Think upon it. It may produce that pain and contrition of heart which will endear the balm of mercy to you. See what you deserve, and think what Jesus suffered. *He* did not forget God, nor even amidst the agonies of the cross did he forget you. "*Father, forgive them !*" was his cry. Realize this scene,—and you will be earnest in supplication for that grace of the Spirit whereby you may amend your lives and live according to God's holy Word. And oh ! that you may hereafter feel a fervour which you never realized before, while saying—'From all evil and mischief ; from sin ; from the crafts and assaults of the devil ; from thy wrath, and from everlasting damnation,—Good Lord, deliver us.'

SERMON X.

THE BETTER FEAST.

ISAIAH LXV. 13, 14.

Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of Spirit.

It is observable how frequently in Holy Scripture mankind are divided into two classes. In one place they are the sheep and the goats which the good shepherd will eventually separate, the one from the other. In another place they are the barren and the fruitful branches of the true vine. Again, they are compared to tares and wheat; the former of which shall be burned with fire unquenchable, and the latter gathered into the celestial garner. They are described also as walking after the flesh and after the Spirit. And "then," says the Prophet Malachi, "shall ye return and discern be-

tween the righteous and the wicked, *between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.* In the text, too, the Lord God himself clearly distinguishes between his servants and others. The one shall eat, drink, and rejoice; the other shall hunger, thirst, and be sorrowful. Among many things which characterize them respectively is this, the servants of the Lord are “careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, they make known their requests unto God, and the peace of God keeps their heart and mind through Jesus Christ.” Such as “do evil before his eyes and choose that wherein he delighteth not,” are careful and troubled about many things. The one are solicitous to seek “first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” in the believing confidence that all other needful blessings shall be added unto these nobler benefits: the other are desirous mainly to possess an earthly portion, and have little or no concern about a world to come. The souls of both parties are alike immortal, and capable alike of immortal joys and pleasures; but the gratifications of the one as entirely differ from the gratifications of the other as do their respective tastes, aims, and hopes. “*Behold!*” saith the Lord God; and let our ear be turned with heedful attention to “what the Lord God saith concerning us”—“*Behold, my servants shall eat, but, &c. &c.*”

These words naturally lead us to consider,

- I. The blessedness of the Lord's servants.
And II. The misery of those who disobey him.

In considering

- I. *The blessedness of the Lord's servants.*

We must observe that the Lord's servants are they

who have felt the emptiness of all mere transitory pursuits; whose souls have been won to Jesus Christ, and who can feelingly say with Isaiah, "Other Lords beside Thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy Name." They have—not professedly only, but really and truly, 'renounced the Devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the World, with all covetous desires of the same, so that they will not follow or be led by them.' They found Satan to be a hard master, and the ways of transgression to be ways of sorrow and pain: God's service, on the contrary, is become their perfect and delightful freedom, and to do his will on earth as angels do it in the realms of light, is their simple desire and aim. They are not their own, but the purchased property of Him who hath redeemed them to God by his blood. "Born from above" they affect a "conversation in Heaven." While their Lord delayeth his coming, they "watch." "As the eyes of a servant look unto the hand of his master, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, (to catch the first intimation of their will and to be ready instantly to obey it) so do their eyes wait upon the Lord their God, until that he have mercy upon them." In short, they "serve the Lord with gladness," and their graciously condescending Lord, "rejoicing over them to do them good," declares, "My servants shall eat; my servants shall drink; my servants shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart."

They *shall eat*. The Lord's servants may be in a country far removed from holiness and happiness, and where has arisen a mighty famine of spiritual food; but "*they* shall want no manner of thing that is good." It is with others to "fill their belly with husks;" they have "bread enough and to spare." Plenteous, rich,

and various are the provisions of their Father's house. Once, indeed, they were "aliens and foreigners" even as others; but now they are "fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God." Once they "were as sheep going astray; they are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of their Souls." He is the true Joseph to whom the true Israel apply for the bread whereby they and their little ones may live. Like the once sorrowing Hannah, *when her prayer was heard*, "she did eat and was no more sorrowful:" so the servants of the Lord Jesus, "eat and are satisfied." Like their Lord in the day of his suffering humanity, they have "meat to eat which the world knoweth not of." They "hunger no more, neither thirst any more," after perishable and passing gratifications. They taste the graciousness of God. A moment's recollection before him and in the apprehension of eternal things, affords sublimer joy than a thousand years of pleasurable sin could do. They are satiated with the Divine goodness, and replenished with spiritual blessing. There is not a promise of mercy in the Bible but affords food to their faith and comfort to their souls. In fine, they are "*the blessed of the Lord;*" and "*their heritage is of me, saith the Lord.*" Individually, therefore, may they say, "*Surely the lot is fallen unto me in a fair place; yea, I have a goodly heritage.*"

But God's servants *shall drink*. They may be in "a dry and thirsty land where no water is:" but the God whom they serve says, "When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs

of water.”^a Of old, he caused refreshing streams to issue from the rock of flint “to give drink to Israel his chosen :” and now also would he repeat the same gracious and mysterious work rather than his servants should not be refreshed and blessed. *Would* repeat it, did I say ? Has he not “provided some *better* thing for us ?” Yes, truly : The rod of his justice has smitten the Rock of Salvation,^b and now doth “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal,” cheering and exhilarating as the dew of Heavenly blessing, go along with his people through the wilderness of sin to the Canaan of promise. Time was, perhaps, when *they* too drank of the shallow and unsatisfying streams of sensual mirth : but the waters were bitter as the waters of Marah.^c Drink as they would of these earthly streams, they “thirsted again.” Desire remained unsatiated and the soul unblessed. They felt as Hagar did when she sat down so mournfully in the wilderness to see her child die. God, at length, directed them to “a flowing well,” and now how sweetly sounds the voice of invitation—“Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat ; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price !” Where spiritual thirst has been created, the abounding mercies and consolations of the Gospel are bestowed. A voice of winning and beseeching entreaty, says “*Come unto me and drink :*” it is “the voice of the Beloved.” The servants of God are secretly but effectually drawn to him. Fearing at first to come, they look about them for “money” or merit whereby to purchase the Divine favour. Unable to find any, and feeling a continually increasing thirst, they, at last, venture to come “without money and without price.” Poor and worthless as they are, Jesus Christ receives them graciously, and

^a Isa. xli. 17, 18.

^b Deut. xxxii. 15.

^c Exod. xv. 23.

becomes to them, with all his treasured fulness of blessing, their Lord and Saviour. And so mercifully does he deal with them, that they also become "as a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." The Spirit of Christ quickens and refreshes the believing soul through the time of its earthly sojourn, and will eventually "spring up" and issue in the believer's "everlasting life." The Heavenly Master gives his disciples "living water" to drink; and each drop of spiritual comfort which they now receive is both a pledge and a foretaste of that fathomless shoreless ocean of delight which they shall hereafter enjoy for ever. With what propriety, then, may we add,

The servants of the Lord *shall rejoice and sing for joy of heart!* They may, it is true, be often in circumstances painful and distressing; for man is born to trouble: but the servants of Christ can "take *pleasure* in necessities and distresses." Their Master's strength is "perfected," or shewn to be perfect, in their weakness. Sometimes, it may be, "their sighs are many and their heart is faint:" but God "turns and revives them again, and causes his servants to rejoice in him." Occasional hunger, painfulness, and weariness, do but enhance the value of "a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, a feast of fat things full of marrow." It is "in *the night*," the Lord especially "giveth songs." Paul and Silas had, perhaps, never sang so sweetly, had they not sung amidst dungeon-horrors and midnight shades. Prisons, chains, and quaternions of soldiers, cannot affect "the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." The liberty of His servants is a "*glorious liberty*." There is no one called in the Lord, even though he be another's servant, but he is the *Lord's freeman*. And my servants *shall* sing, my servants *shall* rejoice, is the promise of a faithful God. "Heaviness may en-

dure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” “Light is *sown* for the righteous,” and “it *springeth up* in their darkness.” In all circumstances, they will “speak good of their Redeemer’s Name,” and “sing and make melody in their hearts to the Lord.” They shall speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power, to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. (Psalm cxlv. 11, 12.) As for their enemies, they shall laugh them to scorn, whilst among themselves they shall enjoy a sweet and peaceful union with their Lord, and with each other in him. The poor in spirit; them that mourn; the meek; them that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; the merciful; the pure in heart; the peace-makers; the reviled and persecuted for Jesus’ sake, are “blessed.” None, indeed, know their blessedness, but those who feel it: it is “a joy with which the stranger intermeddleth not.” Even amidst the agonies of the last conflict, Christian Principle, sustained and perfected by the grace of God, shall triumph over all the pains of nature and the powers of darkness. That conflict over, the servants of God shall indeed “rejoice and sing for joy of heart!” A harp attuned to the high praises of both redeemed and unfallen multitudes, shall tell, in strains of most perfect and unmingled harmony, the blessedness of the people whose God is the Lord; yea, the blessedness of the people who have the Lord for their God. They *shall eat*; they *shall drink*; they *shall rejoice*. And when come to the heavenly state in the resurrection-life and glory, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Mark, then, the blessedness of God’s servants: see how truly we may accommodate the words of Moses to them, and exclaim—“Happy art thou, O Israel! who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord?”

Consider we

II. *The misery of those who disobey Him:—*

But, alas ! my Brethren, that so fair and beautiful a theme as that we have just contemplated, should be followed by one in every respect its opposite ! We feel almost disposed to close the subject here, rather than to forego our meditations on the blessedness of the Lord's servants ; but in that case, we should leave our text unexplicated, and those who serve not God amongst you might suppose we feared to declare unto them their wretchedness. One advantage, too, we trust, will accrue from a prosecution of our subject—you will see the blessedness of God's servants in contrast with the misery of the disobedient ; and things *contrasted* are usually the most distinguishable and impressive.—But *who* are those that serve not the Lord ? Such as “walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts.” Their language is “*Who is the Lord, that we should obey him ?*” “*As for this Man, we will not have Him to reign over us.*” Now, the misery of such characters is extreme. “Thus saith the Lord God, Ye shall be hungry ; ye shall be thirsty ; ye shall be ashamed, and shall cry for sorrow of heart and shall howl for vexation of spirit.”

They shall be hungry. What a craving may we observe in many—a painful and continual craving, after something unpossessed, and which seems to be desirable to make them happy ! There is within them an aching void. Aware of no higher good, and having no taste for spiritual pleasures, they endeavour to fill the want they feel so sensibly, with earthly and perishable things. If wealth be their idol, they will “rise early and late take rest” to accumulate it. If pleasure be their object, they will pass days and nights together in the pursuit of it—heedless alike of fatigue, danger, or disease, whilst ful-

filling so eagerly the desires of the flesh and of the mind. If a village feast be the scene of expected or immediate enjoyment, this, even *this*, trifling and vain as are its usual accompaniments, will occasion more thought, anxiety, and care, to many persons, than an approaching Communion, a dying bed, or even an eternal world beyond it. The worshippers of Mammon eat indeed, but “they feed on ashes.” No permanent satisfaction flows from carnal indulgences. Dives fared sumptuously, and that *every* day :—but his soul was lean and wretched. “The true bread” alone can nourish and sustain man’s better part. Where this is unvalued and unknown, possess what we may, enjoy what we may, we neither possess nor enjoy any thing worth a thought. Let the “servant of Sin” but become “the servant of Righteousness,” and we will venture to tell him beforehand that he will “set to his seal that our testimony is true :”—he will unhesitatingly acknowledge, “I have eaten ashes as it were bread : I have spent my strength for nought, and my money for that which satisfieth not.” And is not this to starve amidst abundance ? Is not this a state of mind the most comfortless and sad ?

Moreover, the Lord says that those who dishonour him *shall be thirsty*. Where worldly and covetous desires predominate, they resemble an insatiable thirst : no “excess of riot,” no abundance of earthly good, no amusement, however refined or vulgar, will satisfy them. Like the Grave, they are ever saying, “Give, give ;” but they never say, “It is enough.” Every delight of the sensualist may be compared to the water of Jacob’s well, of which “whosoever drinketh shall thirst again.” It is impossible that any water but “the water of life” should refresh and satisfy our anxious minds. “The god of this world” may tell his votaries that the pleasures of sin are sweet ; he may successfully

allure them to a participation of those pleasures ; and try to drown their apprehension of danger in frivolity and noise : but Satan will be found a deceiver still, and all sinful indulgences but so many drops of “ the lake that burneth.” Blame not our plainness of speech : shall we see so many of our fellow-sinners forsaking “ the Fountain of Living Waters, and hewing out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water,” and shall we refrain from crying, “ Ho ! every one that thirsteth”—ho ! every one that is desirous of happiness, forsake your vain delusions, and “ with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of Salvation ?” Ye *shall* thirst, while ye drink only of polluted fountains. And O how miserable will it be everlastingly to thirst, and everlastingly to be destitute of mercy and peace. The rich man wanted “ a drop of water” in hell, and even *that* little favour could not be obtained. Let the drunkard hear and tremble. Let the sensualist fear and pray.

But, such as serve not God *shall be ashamed and shall cry for sorrow of heart, and howl for vexation of spirit.*—*Shame ; sorrow ; vexation ; sorrow of heart ; vexation of spirit :* what an accumulation of words to express the wretchedness of the ungodly ! However things and circumstances may blend one with another now, and however dimly their future consequences may be discerned, the time is coming when both the things of this world and the realities of an after state, will stand forth in bold and just proportion. God and Mammon, with their respective services, wages, and rewards ; the pleasures of piety and those of sense ; the blessedness of the real Christian, and the misery of the mere nominal professor of Christianity ; all will easily and clearly appear in that day. Then how ashamed and confounded will the servants of sin be ! How willingly would they that “ mountains

and rocks should fall on them and cover them !” But, were it even possible for them to be buried beneath the ruins of a world, yet, possessing a rational and conscious existence, shame and disappointment would still possess them :—their *heart* would be sorrowful, and their *spirit* would be vexed. Where would now be the foolish sports, the carnal songs, the “filthy jestings,” wherewith they once sought to gratify and please themselves and others ? Alas ! they are exchanged for cries of sorrow and for howlings of despair. The once-forgotten words of the preacher—“ I said of laughter, it is mad ; and of mirth, what doeth it ?”—will then be painfully remembered. Often *now* “in the laughter” of the gay and frivolous, “the heart is sorrowful ;” and “the *end* of their mirth,” we are sure, “is heaviness.” If the lover of pleasure would confess it, there is, not unfrequently, amidst his gayest hours, a horrible dread overwhelming him. In the secrecy of retirement, in the stillness of recollection, there is sometimes a smothered cry of sorrow or a burst of agony, which the man of pleasure vainly endeavours to suppress. Smiles may beam upon the *public* face, and there may be a “don’t care” apparent in the whole *outward* deportment ; but a worm gnaws those smiles at their root, and within there is “a fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation.” The followers of Jesus Christ may be contemned, and their conscientiousness may be termed preciseness ; but their opposers are frequently constrained to allow the superiority and excellency of their character, and the felt conviction of their mind is—‘ We revere, we honour, we approve your spirit, and secretly do we wish ourselves like you.’ Such is the wretched bondage of these “sinners against their own souls.” They *are* miserable, and *will*, hereafter *be*——but I forego the subject : I was going, however, to allude to the future destiny of those who do

not serve God : but it is enough to repeat—*They shall hunger, they shall thirst, they shall cry for sorrow of heart and howl for vexation of spirit.*

Such is both the blessedness of the Lord's servants, and the misery of those who disobey him : And that you may the more beneficially improve this Discourse, allow me to ADDRESS

1. *Any who serve the Lord among you.*

And to you I say, Be thankful unto the Lord in that he has made you his people. Ye were once in bondage to Sin and Satan even as others ; but in the day of your Redeemer's mercy, ye became willing to serve a Master in Heaven. Ye *were* wanderers, ye *are* returned. Ye *were* slaves, ye *are* children. Religion *was* your drudgery, it *is* your pleasure. "A portion in this life" was all you desired ; Christ is now your "all and in all." Ye are gratefully willing that "*this Man should reign over you,*" and you would be happy to spend and be spent in his service. Then may you "eat, drink, and rejoice." The Lord whom you love engages to supply your wants, to accept your services, and to reward, infinitely beyond their utmost merit, your works of faith and labours of love. A "hundred-fold" will he repay all that you may lose for his sake. Though "eternal life" will not be the wages of your servitude, yet "a cup of cold water"—the most trifling kindness, bestowed in love upon a servant or disciple of Jesus, "shall in no wise lose its reward." Your justification and glory will compensate "the travail of the Redeemer's soul," and be *given* for the *Redeemer's sake* to you. Still, however, the services of love will meet "a reward of grace," and there is nothing you even design or endeavour from faith in Christ and love to his Name,

that will be disregarded or forgotten. If so, how unreservedly, how cheerfully, how gratefully, should you serve your heavenly Master! Be careful, then, for nothing. "Bread *shall* be given you; your waters *shall* be sure." Depend on Jesus for them as your souls may need them. Confide in his power and wisdom. You may not always see the reasons of his conduct towards you; but "what ye know not now, ye shall know hereafter." Let him be the companion and the food of your soul. Then indeed shall your "mouth be filled with laughter and your tongue with praise." "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," shall express the joyous gratulation of your hearts, and ye shall *indeed* rejoice. Turn not again, no, not in *appearance*, to "the weak and beggarly elements" whereunto so many desire to be in bondage; but stand fast in your Christian liberty. Use not that liberty "for an occasion to the flesh:" but let your inquiry be "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?" and "what your hand findeth to do, do it with your might," "with good-will doing service, not as pleasing men, but God who searcheth the heart." In your social and friendly visits, forget not "*whose* servants ye are." Do not be ashamed of Christ and of his word. "Hold fast the *profession* of your faith," and let the superiority of your religious principles appear in your indifference to mere worldly enjoyment and carnal mirth. Think of the mercies of your God; and in the recollection of his "exceeding great and precious promises," "eat, O Beloved, yea drink, drink abundantly, O Beloved."^a So shall you "go from strength to strength until you appear before the Lord in Zion:" and when you have reached the city of your everlasting habitation, "ye shall hunger

^a Cant. v. 1.

no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on you, nor any heat : For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and shall lead you unto living fountains of water ; and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes."

2. *To any who regard not God,*

I say, Think what is your state and danger. Your disinclination to God's service, and the willing surrender of yourselves, your mind, your strength, and time, to the world, very plainly intimate whose you are and whom you serve. Your wages will correspond with your servitude : and "*the wages of sin is DEATH.*" Solomon tauntingly addresses you, saying,—"*Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth ; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and the sight of thine eyes,—but know thou, for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.*" And consider *Whose* judgment it is you provoke. "Hast thou an arm like God ? or canst thou thunder with a voice like his ?" You may, if you please, "eat, drink, and be merry : " but the world, with its fashions, its friendships, and its pleasures, will most assuredly fail you ; whilst your hunger, your thirst, and sorrow will remain. If you go into eternity without any taste of the Redeemer's graciousness, or any relish for spiritual things, good were it for you had you never been born. Heaven truly is opened—its everlasting doors are unfolded ; but—*only to believers.* "Blessed truly are the dead, but—*only they who die in the Lord.*" Free truly are those whom the Son makes free—*all are slaves beside.* And the portion of a child will certainly never be awarded to an alien : the bond-woman and her children, shall be cast out ; nor can the children of the bond-woman be heirs with the children of the free.

The glorious end of man's existence will be lost in you, and you will mourn its loss with unavailing sorrow and vexation for ever. "Except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God," you will be found destitute of spiritual life. If ye cannot relish the Feast which the Lord has provided in the ordinances of his Church below, no feast with the redeemed in glory awaits your coming into the eternal world. If you rise not to the life of righteousness, you will not rise to the life of immortal blessedness. If "the songs of Zion" here afford no melodious gladness to your souls, you will never join the "Alleluia" of angels and the spirits of the just made perfect. Then *think on these things*. Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness; but rather reprove them. Seek the renewing, converting, sanctifying, grace of the Holy Spirit: "seek and you shall find." "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

"Grace be with you all. Amen."

SERMON XI.

DECISION OF CHARACTER ENFORCED.

LUKE XXII. 54.

And Peter followed afar off.

THERE is a short, but beautiful and comprehensive description of the Lord's people in the 148th Psalm, which cannot fail, we conceive, to please and interest every thoughtful and considerate mind: they are described as—“*a People NEAR unto Him.*” The Lord their God hath chosen them to be a *special* People unto himself,^a and they have been *brought nigh* by the blood of Jesus.^b Their fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.^c A holy familiarity subsists between them and the eternal God. Does He say, “Seek ye my face?” their hearts reply, “Thy face, Lord, will we seek.” They are happy only when the light of his countenance shines brightly on them. So *peculiar* a People are they—a People so singularly privileged, that we may well ask with Moses, “Who is like unto thee, O People?” *Who*, indeed? Where shall we find such? Whom does this nearness to God charac-

^a Deut. vii. 6.

^b Eph. ii. 13.

^c 1 John i. 7.

terize? Alas! we fear few walk with God as Enoch walked with him! Few converse with God as Abraham conversed with him! May we not rather say with the Apostle—" *All men seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ.*" True, a *profession* of piety is common: there is not a little *apparent* nearness to God. In some neighbourhoods religion happens to be prevalent: many persons are awed into a respect for its accustomed forms: it is, perhaps, reputable to be pious: a profession of piety is therefore readily assumed: many follow the Lord; but, alas! it is afar off: there is a want of decisiveness in the mind and character: they "endure for a while, and in time of temptation fall away." Such was Peter's indecision; and from the circumstance of his following his Lord in this manner, we shall take occasion to show,—

- I. What is implied in following the Lord afar off:
- II. What usually induces any persons to do so:
- And III. Why we should determine to follow Him fully.

We are to shew

- 1. *What is implied in following the Lord afar off:—*

It is implied that there is a Lord to follow, and to be convinced that we ought to follow him. Peter knew and acknowledged Jesus to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God;" he felt it, moreover, to be his duty to follow him; he, therefore, followed Jesus: but, *how* did he follow him? Why, Peter went with Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane: there, however, he could not watch with his Lord "one hour." Farther, he went with Jesus to the Judgment Hall: when come thither,

he “tarried without.” John—the more affectionate and now more courageous John, “went out and brought in Peter :” when within, Peter mixed—not with the friends of Jesus Christ, but—with “the servants of the High Priest.” He followed the Lord, you observe ; but it was “afar off.” And thus to a certain extent many follow the Lord. They believe that “God hath anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power,” and “hath exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour :” they therefore ‘call and profess themselves Christians ;’ are, (it may be, in their own judgment) very religious, and particularly so on the Sabbath and with religious persons ; bow at the name of Jesus, honour him with their lips, and with their mouth shew much love ; but—(alas ! for this “*fair shew in the flesh*” that an exceptive *but* must follow it)—where is their watchfulness ? where is their self-denial ? where is their acknowledgment of Jesus Christ in circumstances of difficulty and trial ? Peter-like, they follow the Lord, but it is afar off. Jesus triumphant, riding into Jerusalem amidst the hosannas of the multitude, they acknowledge and would make a King ; Jesus suffering, they, along with the same multitude, crucify and deny. Possibly they observe the Sabbath, and very likely partake of the Lord’s Supper ; but it is pleasing to them that there is but one Sabbath in a week ; and far more joyous and alive are they at *another* feast than at the Communion of the body and blood of our Saviour, Christ. These followers of the Lord would fain go to heaven—would fain be happy after death, and rise in the resurrection of the Just : in order to this, they see clearly that they *must* be religious, and statedly attend upon religious duties ; but where is their *willingness* to do so ? They know not the freedom which marks the presence of the Eternal Spirit. The Scriptures, per-

haps, they read ; but not “as a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls,” or as one would search for “a treasure hid in a field.” With them, it is a something towards expiating guilt or purchasing salvation. They pray too, and their prayer may be ‘diligently to keep God’s commandments,’ ‘perfectly to love him, and worthily to magnify his holy Name :’ they may even ask Almighty God for ‘such a sense of all his mercies’ as will constrain them to ‘shew forth his praise not only with their lips, but in their lives, by giving up themselves to his service, and walking before him in holiness and righteousness all their remaining days ;’ and yet all this solemnity of expression may be no more than the sound of a tinkling cymbal. Where is their *diligence* to “rule themselves after God’s Word ?” Where is—not, indeed, the perfection of love, but—any real love whatever ? If the *Letter* of the Law be observed, how is the *Spirit* of it regarded ?—Where is that total surrender of self—body, soul and spirit, to the Lord, which our Church so beautifully and clearly teaches and solicits ? Alas ! how many “draw nigh unto God with their mouth, while their heart is far from him.” Peter followed afar off, and so do they. They “follow Jesus in the way ;” but halt, go back, and turn to the right hand or to the left, as suits their taste or inclination. Now, as Peter sat, they sit with the Lord at his table ; presently, they go into companies of worldly and ungodly people—see Jesus betrayed and crucified afresh, hear his Truth calumniated, and his People mocked : and yet they dare not frankly avow their attachment to their Master, or speak a word in vindication of his servants and his Word. Know ye not such characters ? Do we describe mere ideal personages ? You know we do not : and it is in the temper and conduct of such

characters and individuals that you may see What is implied in following the Lord afar off.

But surely there must be something sadly ensnaring and deceptive that prevents our following the Lord fully. We proceed therefore, to shew

II. *What usually induces any persons to do so :—*

The circumstances, situations, and events, which operate on the mind and influence the choice of the generality of people are very various. But, there are, we conceive, two things which, in particular, induce many to follow the Lord afar off: These are—*The fear of man*, and *the love of the world*.

And 1. *The fear of Man*. It is a fact which no true observer of the human kind will controvert, that, naturally, man glories in what should shame him, and is ashamed of what should be his glory. This contrariety of principle we inherit from the first transgressor. No sooner had Adam eaten the forbidden fruit but he was ashamed and afraid of his Maker. This shame of God, and its unholy consequent—*fear of man*, are common to our fallen nature. I have no doubt but that one and all of you whom I address can recollect a period in your earthly history when you have felt “ashamed of Christ and of his Word,” and *that* through a fearful apprehension of what *man* might think or say of you. This was Peter’s case. When it was said to him—“Thou art of them” that believe on Jesus—and again, “This man also was with Jesus”—and again, “Of a truth, this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean”—so ashamed was Peter of his Lord and so afraid of Man’s disfavour, that thrice did he disavow any knowledge of his Master, and to his third denial of Him, added

“oaths and curses.” Alas ! may we say, *what is man ?* Had Peter gone boldly into the Palace of the High Priest—had he feared God rather than man—had he owned in the person of the persecuted and insulted Jesus the Friend and Saviour of his soul, why, perhaps, he would have shared his Master’s sufferings and been taunted and reproached as Jesus was : this he feared ; and therefore through the fear of man, Peter followed afar off. And is this case singular ? Does it stand the only one of its kind in the records of human frailty and weakness ? By no means. Half-heartedness in religion is no uncommon thing. Multitudes shrink from a sincere and candid avowal of their faith in Christ. With the pious, they affect piety ; with the impious, they forego their piety, and wrapping their talent, for a season, in a napkin, they bury it in the earth, and lose the recollection of an hereafter reckoning, in the pursuit of mere earthly and perishable good. They would attend the ministration of the Truth ; but they fear being observed where it is faithfully dispensed. They would read and sing and pray in their social visits with each other ; but it would be peculiar, and people would make remarks. They would like to exercise family worship, and perhaps occasionally practise it, but a stranger’s presence is quite a sufficient pretext for its omission. And whence is this ? The *fear of man* is the occasion of it. People follow the Lord ; but care not to be known to do so. They would rather “*all men should speak well of them,*” forgetful of the “*woe*” which the friendship of the world too surely induces. They would worship the God of Israel, yet fain be allowed to “*bow themselves in the House of Rimmon.*”^a It is true, the Scripture says, “*Fear not them which kill the body,*

^a 2 Kings v. 18.

and after that have no more that they can do :” but “fear Him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell ; yea, I say unto you, fear him :” but this portion of the Bible is passed lightly over, and still “in a sinful and an adulterous generation” are many ashamed to confess their Lord.

2. But we said *the love of the world* was another thing whereby many were induced to follow him afar off. By *the world* is usually meant pleasure, honour, wealth, fame, or whatever else of a worldly kind satisfies the carnal mind : by *the love* of the world is meant a preference of *its* transitory good, to the fear, favour, love, and service of God. The world gains access to our heart by all our senses. Our heart it finds a congenial soil for all its vanities. It is, therefore, pursued with avidity and coveted with earnestness. Personal safety, spiritual peace, yea, the Son of God himself, is sacrificed for the world and the possession of its advantages. But, the love of the world is not compatible with the love of God. God’s express command is—“Love not the world, neither the things of the world.” “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world,” and is therefore opposed to God and to his righteous government. Those, then, who will, at any rate, indulge the flesh, gratify the senses, deify (if we may so say) their persons, and bow down to the shrine of ever changeful and insipid fashion, must, as St. James observes, constitute themselves the enemies of God and of his kingdom.^a Now, many would fain share the felicity of the Redeemer’s servants—bear their palm and wear their crown ; but they cannot be prevailed upon to forego earthly for Heavenly things, to cease from

^a Ch. iv. 4. original.

things below and to set their affections on things above. They would look to the cross of Jesus for redemption from the punishment of sin, but not, equally with that, for deliverance from the love of this present evil world.^a “The cup of salvation,” they will not refuse; but there is a cup of a widely different kind which they prefer to it. “The songs of Zion” befit the solemnity of the Sabbath; and add a zest to public worship; but *other songs*—songs that swell not with the praises of Jesus Christ—are sweeter to their taste. They are exceedingly afraid of over-much righteousness, but seldom doubt the probability of their not being righteous enough.^b “Lord, Lord,” say they to Jesus Christ; but they do not the things that he commands them. ‘I believe in God,’ is their individual acknowledgment; but “in works they deny him.” They would be disciples of Christ; but they must keep friends with Mammon. We tell them, and would allure them thither, of a world of immortal glory: our word, it may be, is heeded for a moment as the passing melody of a lovely song; but there follows no agonizing effort to obtain that world.^c We tell them of a Saviour, and assure them of the blessedness of those “who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth”—“through evil and through good report” below, and then through the blissful realms of his everlasting kingdom: perhaps they follow him; but it is coldly, distantly, formally. There is no decisiveness of principle or character. With all their pretences to religion, the root of the matter is wanting. They are still afar off. Zoar is in view: but something wins the attention and obtains the regard, and they linger in the plain that stretches between Sodom and their refuge.^d “The *love* of money” may well be called

^a Gal. i. 4. ^b Matt. v. 20. ^c Luke xiii. 24. ^d Gen. xix. 16.

“the root” of this evil; and “how *hardly* shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” I think, then, you will allow that *the fear of man* and *the love of the world* are those things which do usually induce any people to follow the Lord afar off.

It now only remains to shew

III. *Why we should determine to follow Him fully:*

There are many reasons why we should be determined to follow the Lord fully and unreservedly: mark the following.

It is *dishonourable to God* to follow him afar off. God says, “My son, give me thy *heart*.” He asks the heart’s undivided homage. Nothing—nothing whatsoever, must rival him in our affections. He veils the glories of his eternal Godhead with humanity, in order to be more accessible to his creatures. He is in Jesus Christ altogether admirable and lovely—worthy of our supreme regard, our unbounded veneration, our everlastingly increasing love. The alienation of our heart from him must then be dishonourable to him. If we refuse him our heart, or allow him only a subordinate place in our affections, we do “despite unto the Spirit of his grace,” and manifestly value man’s favourable opinion of us, rather than the approving judgment of our God. But “who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, or of the son of man which shall be made as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?”^a God is our Father: “if then, says he, I be a Father, where is mine honour?” God is our Master: “if then, says he again, I be your Master, where is my fear?”^b “*One* is your Master, even Christ.”^c And

^a Isa. li. 12, 13.

^b Mal. i. 6.

^c Matt. xxiii. 10.

shall it be thought a great matter to wait on the person and to execute the will of some earthly potentate, and a thing mean and dishonourable to serve the Lord of lords and the King of kings? Shall it be grateful to us to speak approvingly of some human master, benefactor, or friend? and shall we shun the mention of the all-glorious, all-gracious Master, Benefactor, and Friend of our souls? No fellow-creature would thank us for a heartless and unwilling service: will the Son of God deem himself honoured by our following him afar off? He bids us to “take up our cross daily and follow him,” and tells us we “cannot be his disciples” unless we do so. Not with our lips merely are we to draw nigh to him and to honour him, but with our heart. It is “with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness,” and subsequently that “confession is made by the mouth unto salvation.” It will avail little to be not *far* from the kingdom of God, if we get no further. It is only by a cordial and entire surrender of ourselves and all our powers to the Lord, and a simple, sincere, and unaffected deference to his will, that we can duly honour him. Peter followed afar off, and how dishonourable to his Master was this conduct! Caleb “followed the Lord fully,” and how was the Lord honoured in his servant! O Beloved, let these examples admonish us, and let the saying that is written be influential on our hearts—“Them that honour me, I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”^a

It is, moreover, *ruinous to our peace* to be undecided in religion. I do not believe we can possibly be happy while we do not cordially and devotedly follow the Lord. There will be a painful sense of insincerity, and, consequently, a continual apprehension of Divine

^a 1 Sam. ii. 30.

displeasure. The doubts and fears, the failures and sorrows, of many professed followers of Jesus Christ, may, we conceive, be correctly traced to double-mindedness in his service. People may hope by compliance now with the wishes of one party, and anon with the wishes of another, to please all parties, and thereby to keep on friendly terms both with the disciples and the enemies of the Saviour; but in vain: really and decidedly Christian characters will deem them inconsistent; and the world will not thank them for half their heart. In such a case religion will be *endured* rather than *enjoyed*. Peace of conscience will precariously depend—not on the atonement of the holy Jesus, but—on the favour or disfavour of man. Now, union betwixt light and darkness there can be none: the one will struggle with the other, till the stronger dominates. Christ hath no concord with Belial; and therefore he that believeth should have no part with an infidel.^a Look at Peter: he would please men; in order to do so, he thrice denied his Lord. True; “the Lord turned and looked upon Peter,” and that look of mingled tenderness and reproof humbled the fallen Apostle, and brought him to tears of penitential sorrow; but the tears he shed were tears of bitterness—and invariably will the same cause produce the same effect. Distressed soever as ye may be, there is one question which will generally discover to you the occasion of your anguish—‘How do you follow the Lord, fully or afar off?’—Let this then be another argument for decisiveness of mind on the side of God and godliness.

To follow the Lord afar off is, finally, *injurious to the general interests of Religion*. It not only detracts from the excellence and satisfactoriness of personal

^a 2 Cor. vi. 15.

piety, but it seems to say to a world listening ever to catch unfavourable rumours of religion, because glad at all times to find excuses for its own negligence and sinfulness—‘There is not that in Religion which the Scriptures represent to be in it, and which some few profess to find in it: We do not find in Christ those unsearchable riches, and in his service those pleasurable enjoyments, which we thought to have found: His kingdom, he tells us, is not now of this world; we must, therefore, forego the world we love, and walk by faith in view of a kingdom to us future and to come. Those who persecuted Him, too, he tells us, will also persecute us: now we would fain reign without suffering with him. And what is more, we must sit at our Master’s feet; and whilst we sit there, we must learn of him, notwithstanding our birth, station, and moral goodness, to be meek and lowly in heart. Following him as we please, does not suffice. With *all* our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength, must we love him. We must forsake *ALL* for his sake: on this condition only will he acknowledge any to be his followers. Deny ourselves, and watch, and pray, we must; and that, not statedly (as before a Communion, for instance) but daily, hourly, constantly. You need not, therefore, trouble yourselves much about the Gospel or wish to be singularly religious. Jesus of Nazareth was a poor man: no worldly honours will reward your attendance on him, and by our following him so distantly, you may see we do not very greatly esteem him or very abundantly enjoy his favour.’ And why, we would know, do you not love him more, and more abundantly enjoy the consolations that are in Christ? It is simply because you follow the Lord so negligently. And can the conduct which says in effect what we have imagined to be said in words, recommend religion? Far from it.

It is too true that a reluctant or an inconsistent profession of religion does very material injury to the progress and increase of vital godliness among men. Our own Church says, ‘ If any man be a dumb Christian, not professing his faith openly, but cloaking and colouring himself for fear of danger, he giveth men occasion, justly and with good conscience, to doubt lest he have not the grace of the Holy Ghost within him, because he is tongue-tied and doth not speak.’ Whereas, let the same individual “ *draw nigh to God,*” and become “ *valiant for the truth in the earth,*” how surely will *his* zeal provoke very many more ! how many will admire the religion of Jesus in him ! and how many will possibly be excited to say, “ We will go with you ; for we have heard that God is with you !”

Because, then, to follow the Lord partially and hesitatingly, is *dishonourable to God, ruinous to our own peace, and injurious to the general interests of religion,* should we, therefore, be determined to follow him fully.

I have now shewn you, as I purposed doing, What is implied in following the Lord afar off, What usually induces any to do so, and Why we should determine to follow him fully.

Allow me, in closing, to ENQUIRE,

1. *Do you follow the Lord at all ?*

Many did not when he was upon earth : many do not now he is in Heaven. The former we deem more excusable than the latter : for the former saw in Jesus only “ a man of sorrows ;” whereas, we know him to be “ over all God blessed for ever :” we bear his name ; we have been, by the ordinance of baptism, admitted

into his visible Church ; we are thus bound by covenant-engagements not to be ashamed of Christ crucified, but manfully to fight under his banner, against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now, do you feel the nothingness of the *world*, and do you dare its utmost enmity against your Saviour and your adherence to him ? Do you mortify the deeds of the *body* ? Do you maintain a warfare, offensive and defensive, with your ghostly enemy, the *devil* ? And is it possible, by your whole conduct and deportment, for all to “take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus ?” Certainly, there ought not to be an adult person among you that did not profess to follow the Lord. Peter wept for following him afar off. How bitterly will you weep who do not follow him at all ! You may choose to find your own ways, and to do your own pleasure ; but you will choose those ways and do that pleasure to your ruin. If Baal be God, then follow him : but, if the Lord be God, follow him : only, “choose ye this day whom ye will serve.” “Jesus hath left us an example that ye should follow his steps.” Then arise and walk in his footsteps. Come with the Marys to his cross : gaze believingly on Jesus crucified, and do so till you can feelingly exclaim —“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” “My soul followeth hard after thee : thy right hand upholdeth me.” Hence I am led to enquire

2. If you are following the Lord, *How are you following him ?* Is your *heart* in your professed subjection to Jesus Christ ? What *motive* influences your conduct ? Is your *mind* (as our xviith. Article says) drawn up to high and heavenly things ? Do you walk, from really Christian principle, religiously in good works ? “Examine yourselves, I pray you, whether ye be in the

faith, prove your own selves." It will be sad for you to think yourselves *in* the faith, and to be found *out* of it. Following afar off will not suffice. It is awfully dangerous to the soul. "Remember Lot's wife." She was out of Sodom and on the way to Zoar; but she looked, only *looked*, back, and she became a monument of God's righteous indignation. The Israelites, too, in the wilderness of Sinai, proclaimed a feast to Jehovah: but their god was an idol and their feast was idolatry. Think too of the Jews—"The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, said they, are we;" but "they were a stiff-necked and gainsaying people." Think of Demas also: Demas was one that followed the Lord: twice is he honourably mentioned in conjunction with Mark and Luke,^a and yet *Demas* forsook the Apostle Paul, "having loved this present world."^b Now "these things are written for our ensamples." They should warn every wavering Peter among you. They should lead you to pray, "Draw me, and we will *run* after thee." Let Peter in his after zeal, intrepidity, and labour, be an example to you of diligence, fidelity, and love. Heed the advice which, from a personal experience of human weakness and redeeming mercy, Peter gives you in his rich and beautiful epistles; and may our Lord Jesus Christ, "after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect—*stablish, strengthen, settle* you."—To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

^a Philem. 24, and Col. iv. 14.

^b 2 Tim. iv. 10.

SERMON XII.

CARELESSNESS FOR THE SOUL REPROVED.

PSALM CXLII. 4.

No man cared for my soul.

THE term 'soul' has various significations in Holy Scripture. In 1 Thess. v. 23, it signifies that mere animal existence which the inferior orders of the creation possess alike with man. It is taken, too, for the whole person, both soul and body; as in Gen. xii. 5, we read that Abram "took the souls which he had gotten in Haran,"—that is, the servants he had purchased and the children which had been born to them—"to go into the land of Canaan." In several places, it must be understood to mean the *life* of man. This is probably the meaning of the term in our text. "No man," says David, "cared for my soul:" that is, no man valued my life, or endeavoured to preserve it from falling a prey to mine enemies. Saul, his father-in-law, was become his persecutor: refuge, David tells us, failed him: with his spirit overwhelmed within him, he

fled to the cave of Adullam :^a there he betook himself to prayer—cried unto the Lord with his voice and poured out his complaint before him ; the burden of which was—no man cared for his soul. The term ‘soul,’ however, is expressive also of man’s rational and immortal part.^b This is its general and common acceptance, and in this sense we shall use it in the present Discourse. Our soul, the wisdom, power, and beneficence of God created : our soul, the blood of Jesus Christ redeemed : our soul, the grace of the Holy Spirit draws, purifies, and will finally glorify. Should not, then, this soul of our’s be cared for ?—“No man,” says the royal Psalmist, “cared for my soul.” Nor is the case of the Psalmist singular. An awful carelessness for the soul prevails. It is our wish kindly and gently to reprove this carelessness ; and we have chosen the text before us if haply, under the Divine blessing, we may, in some measure, correct it. I shall say

- I. How the soul is usually regarded :
And II. Why especially it should be cared for.

And I. *How the soul is usually regarded* will appear in two or three particular instances of remissness and inattention to its welfare.

1. How many a *Child* may say, ‘My parents cared not for my soul. They were attentive to my body, and to my bodily health and preservation. They sought my temporal comfort ; they got me bread to eat and raiment to put on. They felt for me when I lay sick upon my bed ; they spared no trouble to do me service and to get me well again : but, they *cared not for my*

^a 1 Sam. xxii. 1.

^b Matt. x. 28.

SOUL.' Now, may not many children say this? Parents are commonly desirous to provide for their offspring; to see them well and comfortably settled in the world; all which may be harmless and proper in its place; but, when God gives children (for "children and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and *gift* that cometh of the Lord,") He says in effect, 'Educate these little immortal beings for me: bring them up in the nurture and admonition of their Lord: care kindly for them; care for *their souls* chiefly; care for *them* constantly: tell them I have redeemed them by the bloodshedding of my only-begotten Son: tell them that though they lie the ruined wreck of sin upon that dust whence their earthly tenement was taken, yet that they are capable of a new and a divine nature: tell them I have prepared for them that love me such good things as pass all human comprehension, and that I require their remembrance of me now in the days of their youth.' But who does this, my Brethren; who? do you yourselves do it?—Few children, as were Samuel, Jeremiah, and the Baptist John, are sanctified from the womb. Of their own souls, they are very generally careless. Their inattention, however, affords no excuse for the parent's neglect of them: nay, rather, it ought to afford a powerful incentive to parental watchfulness and care.

2. How many a *Servant*, too, may say, 'No master careth for my soul.' Servants are by no means to be contemned on account of their inferior station or office. Honest servitude is an honourable employment. Our holy and merciful Redeemer "made himself of no reputation and took upon him *the form of a servant*." "As *one that serveth*," He lived among men and fulfilled the will of his Father. All mankind have a Master in him. We cannot say that he feels no kindly concern for the souls of *his* servants. Would that all other masters

thought as kindly for their servants as Jesus Christ does for his ! But is it not so ? May not a servant live now with one master, and then with another, or through successive years with the same, and yet no man regard the welfare of his soul ? The temporal comfort and the bodily health of our domestics may be attended to, and perhaps usually are so, for self-interest and personal convenience will prompt us to it : but what has this to do with the soul, and what bearing has it on that eternally enduring state which awaits us, and where the soul must exist for ever ? A servant is as capable of knowledge, of holiness, and of happiness, as a master. “*God is no respecter of persons.*” In his sight the soul of a slave is as precious as the soul of the man who may be lord over him. Look into Genesis xviii. 19, and mark the Lord’s approval of the patriarch Abraham’s “commanding his children and his household after him :” “the footsteps of our Father Abraham” it is both our duty and our privilege to follow. It may indeed be said, ‘Servants have much to do ; their time is fully occupied ; we see not how or when we can attend to their spiritual interests.’ And *have* they so much to do ? and *is* their time so fully occupied ? Then, on these very grounds, should masters more assiduously cultivate in their domestics a proper attention to religious duty. As to *time*, methinks there should be time with every human being to *care for the soul*. The soul is to live for ever : and it is *in time* the soul must be fitted for *eternity*. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap :” if he “sow to the flesh, he shall of the flesh reap corruption ;” and only by “sowing to the Spirit, can he, of the Spirit, reap life everlasting.” Besides, where there is, confessedly, but little *week-day* leisure, there is the whole of the *Sabbath*—that day so mercifully “made for man,” and designed so graciously by the

world's great Master to further the best interests of man's immortal part. It is God's express command that "thy servant may rest as well as thou," and you cannot needlessly (observe, I say, *needlessly*) employ a servant about household affairs, worldly business, or manual labour, on the Sabbath-day, without violating this command of God. By the will and appointment of the Lord, every man has a right to the Sabbath's hallowed moments, means, and mercies.—It may be said again, 'Servants are untractable; they oppose our will and wishes:' be it so: in certain instances, they are rude, ignorant, and trying; but their behaviour by no means affects a master's duty towards them. A master most surely possesses authority in his own house, and whatever may be the disposition of his dependants, he ought, at least, to *endeavour* the spiritual benefit of all within the sphere of his influence. And I may, I think, venture to say that there *could* not be a daily reading of God's Word, a thankful acknowledgment of mercies received, and prayer for continued blessings, without much good being done. The attention might be roused and won, the mind might be impressed, and, in some favoured instances, the heart might be effectually blessed. But, even should not these consequences follow, a servant should never have opportunity to say, 'No one of all my masters cared for my soul.'

But, 3. How many a *Neighbour* may say, "No one careth for my soul." If a Neighbour meet with some sad accident, or what we usually call, a misfortune, what a concern do we all feel for him! how desirous we are to hear the particulars of the event! and how willing, generally, to communicate the intelligence unto others! but, who cares for his *soul*? who feels concerned for *that*? Even should it be said a neighbour is "sick unto death," or such an one is dying: 'poor

thing,' it is replied; and there the matter rests: but the *soul* is not dying, that is about to pass into the world of spirits, and who is solicitous about its pardon and justification, its safety and acceptance? The mere manifestation of any carefulness about it, will be quite sufficient to displease some persons; and any implied doubt of its peace and hope, will be deemed criminal uncharitableness. Now, ought this so to be? may we innocently be thus indifferent to each other's welfare?—Let us suppose a plague to be prevailing here: many are dead and others dying: there is one who possesses a remedy suited to the disease—a remedy, which, if imparted and applied, would heal and save the afflicted: he refuses or neglects to impart it: do you think his conduct neighbourly and kind? No: and yet a plague is begun amongst us; the dire contagion spreads: many are already dead *out of the Lord*, and therefore, we are sure they cannot be *blessed*; others are dying daily, and, we may justly fear, “perishing for lack of knowledge,” and yet, O *yet*, how many a perishing sinner may say, ‘No man cares for me!’ Oh! how unkind is it in one that knows the way of salvation and experiences the sweetness of God’s pardoning mercy, not to communicate that knowledge unto others. It is not our’s to ask with the murderous Cain, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” We *are* our brother’s keeper; “and this commandment have we, that he who loveth God, loves his brother also.” It should be felt a privilege to do a neighbour good—spiritual good especially, and, if possible, by acts of courtesy and self-denial, to win his soul to Christ. If, then, “great things” have been done for you, go home to your house, among your kinsfolk and acquaintance, and tell them Who hath done these things for you, and by your conversation and conduct let “the savour of His knowledge be made manifest in every

place :” so that a neighbour whom it may be in your power to serve, shall not henceforward say,—‘ No man careth for my soul.’

From these instances of carelessness for the soul, you may, I conceive, see clearly, *How the soul is usually regarded*. I come now, therefore, to say,

II. *Why ESPECIALLY it should be cared for.*

There are many and cogent reasons why especially the *soul* should be cared for. Mark the following :—

1. The soul should especially be cared for, *Because it is the noblest part of the creation*. Not till God had created man upon the earth and breathed into him the breath of life, did he behold with supreme complacency all things which he had made, and declare them to be “*very good*.” Man was the master-piece of the Eternal’s workmanship. If we contemplate the body with its various parts—the bones, the flesh, the skin covering it above ; the veins, the arteries, the blood in its mysterious flow ; the pulsation, and in short, every thing connected with the human frame, we are constrained to acknowledge ourselves to be “*fearfully and wonderfully made*.” But what comparison will the body bear, with all its variety of parts, with the soul—with that rational and immortal spirit that actuates and controuls the whole man ? It is in what regards the *soul* that “*man is but a little lower than the angels*.” It is the soul that reasons, hopes, fears, recollects, anticipates. It is the soul that is imperishable : the body returns to the dust again ; the spirit to him who gave it. Only a spiritual substance thinks ; our soul does so ; it must therefore be spiritual in its nature ; and what is spiritual in its nature must necessarily be immortal. If any

thing can add weight to the testimony of Scripture on this interesting point, it is that instinctive love of life we feel within us, and that thrilling shudder which passes through us at the thought of ceasing finally and for ever to exist. A dream shews man to be immortal. And is it not a fact ascertained most truly that through the lapse of years, the particles of our body change, so that the body of the man is not the body of the child, and yet there is in the individual a continued life and a conscious sameness? On what ground can we account for this, if man hath not within him a living and enduring soul?—Because, then, of the soul's essential and peculiar excellence should it especially be cared for.

2. The soul should especially be cared for *on account of its vast capabilities*. The “soul of a beast goeth downward;” it soon arrives to its maturity of existence; it reaches a point beyond which it cannot go. Not so a human soul: there comes no period in *its* existence at which it may be said ‘Hitherto shalt thou go in thy acquisition of knowledge, holiness, and happiness; but no further.’ No: there will be progress towards perfection to all eternity. And seeing that between a creature and its Creator an infinite distance must ever obtain, for ever and for ever will the soul be gaining new and glorious accessions of immortal blessedness. A period in eternity may come when the spirit that now reasons, thinks, and acts, in one of our frail bodies, will have reached the knowledge of a Paul, the lofty fervour of a son of Amos, the seraphic love of a John, and even the almost godlike knowledge, fervour, love, and felicity, of a Gabriel. Of either the soul's primeval or hereafter dignity, we cannot now speak particularly. It lies in moral ruin:—its powers are darkened and defiled by sin: but from those powers though darkened and defiled, we judge it to be capable

of new “glory, honour, and immortality.” Towards it, there are “thoughts of peace” in Jehovah’s heart. In love and in pity will he deliver it. “I called upon thy Name, O Lord,” shall many a poor sinner say, “out of the low dungeon; and thou heardest my voice;” shall be the consequent acknowledgment. “Very gracious will the Lord be at the voice of our cry;” and though the soul even of a believer may occasionally “cleave to the dust,” yet, as being a “partaker of the Divine Nature,” he shall eventually share a happiness the most exalted and refined. It is promised to “the pure in heart, that they shall see God:” and who can conceive what will be the exquisite and unutterable delight of *seeing* God?—of seeing the glory of Jehovah in the face of Jesus Christ? and experiencing therewith a transformation into the same image at the period of the resurrection? The things of the Spirit will then be revealed indeed: the mysteries of Providence, of Grace, and Godliness, will form the high subjects of enquiry to the redeemed and glorified saint through the ever-enduring ages of his being: and if so, should the soul whose capabilities and prospects are so vast and blessed, not be especially cared for?

3. It should, moreover, especially be cared for, *because of the price paid for its redemption*. The soul’s creation without redemption when it was fallen and depraved, would prove a curse rather than a blessing to it: its capabilities, too, would but aggravate its woe. This the great Creator knew: He therefore “spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all;” and He finds in the life and work and death of his beloved Son “a ransom for us.” When no other price could purchase our redemption, the blood of Jesus Christ availed to expiate our guilt and to procure us mercy. Hence Peter beautifully remarks—“Ye were

not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without price." Though, then, we may see somewhat of the soul's worth in its nature and from its powers of understanding, memory, and enjoyment; yet it is in 'the agony and bloody sweat, in the cross and passion' of its Redeemer, that we may most clearly discern its value. We may add to "the kingdoms of this world and all the glory of them," the riches of a thousand worlds like our's, and they would not equal in value a single soul. It would cost more to redeem it. Nothing short of the blood of the incarnate Son of God could effect its redemption, and make manifest the grace which bringeth salvation. And should that for whose recovery to its original, and even more than its original, greatness, such wonderful means were devised, not be cared for? Shall souls be precious in God's sight and of no value in our's? Do we not see from a consideration of the price paid for their redemption, why especially we ought to care both for our own and for other's souls?

And 4. The soul should especially be cared for, *because if lost it will remain lost and unredeemed for ever.* It was here our nature became depraved; it is here our condition must be changed: it is here we fell from the grace given us in Adam; it is here we must be raised again by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, or no where, now or never, must we be delivered from curse and damnation, (I use the language of our Church, Art. xvii.) and be brought by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. A soul may pray in Hell—"I pray thee, father Abraham"—is one represented as saying there; but its prayer will avail nothing to its relief. Others may pray for it; but equally unavailing for it, will be their prayers. Hence

the propriety of the Prophet's counsel, "*Seek ye the Lord* WHILST HE MAY BE FOUND, *call ye upon him* WHILST HE IS NEAR." Now is the day of the Spirit's ministration; now is Christ exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sin: now, therefore, "every one that asketh receiveth; he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh the door shall be opened." Then "ask, and *you* shall have; seek and *you* shall find; knock and the door shall be opened unto *you*." Let the soul be cared for: time is on the wing: moments steal swiftly by: eternity approaches: through all its ever coming ages there will be none to redeem the soul once lost: woe, perpetual woe, will agonize all its faculties: unforgiven sin will mar its peace for ever; its immortality will be its curse, and those powers which should have been employed in the knowledge, the love, and service of their gracious Donor, will prove but so many sources of aggravated and unceasing sorrow to their guilty and condemned possessor. Surely, then, here is another and a powerful reason why we should care especially for our souls.

And now I have said How the soul is usually regarded, and Why especially it should be cared for,—I will only ADDRESS a few words, first, to all generally, and then, to some particularly.

And 1. *To all generally*, I say, Whoever may not care for your souls, care for them yourselves. Let each one of you care for his own soul. Learn to appreciate its value. See of what it is capable. "Commune with your own heart and be still." In the stillness and secrecy of thought, let "your spirit make diligent search." Meditate on all the great and glorious truths of Scripture: meditate especially on God. Converse

with superiors tends to elevate the mind and to refine the manner:—much more will this be the result of “fellowship with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” Think, too, on the “many great and precious promises” God hath given us. It is by exercising faith on these that you are to “purify yourselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God.” If at any time, you feel burdened with a sense of sinfulness, say with David, “Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.” If, again, your spirit be overwhelmed within you, encourage yourselves in the Lord, as David did, and say, “Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him who is the help of my countenance and my God.” If other refuge fail you, betake yourselves to prayer; yea, let the throne of grace be your constant resort. If ye be persecuted for righteousness’ sake, remember Who declares you to be “blessed on that account.” If ye be joyous and happy in the fear and favour of your Lord, acknowledge the source of your happiness. When the World would draw your hearts away from God, and allure you by its specious baits from the paths of watchfulness and prayer, say to its tempting vanities—“My soul is as a weaned child;” weaned from sublunary things, my soul affects a better portion: no present good can satisfy my vast desires: they go beyond the bounds of time, and range the periods of infinity: the *Lord*, therefore, *is*, and the Lord only can be, the satisfying portion of my soul. “He shall guide me by his counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” Thus, though no man may care for your souls—no father, no master, no neighbour; yet may you care for them yourselves, and rejoice contin-

ually in him who careth unweariedly for us all, and is ever gracious unto the souls that seek him.

2. *To some particularly*, I say, Ye that are *Parents* care for the souls of your children. Seek for them “first,” before any other thing whatever, “the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Do so in the believing hope that all other needful things shall be added to these greater mercies. Do not commend and praise children in their presence, as is too commonly done. Good, comparatively and morally, children may be; but good spiritually none can be, except by the grace and Spirit of Jesus Christ. Tell them, rather, how naturally proud, envious, and wicked, even *their* hearts are.^a Tell them how holy God is, and therefore how hateful sin must be to him. Tell them of Jesus, and how tenderly he cares for *little children*. Speak to them of his Spirit, and the Spirit’s office in the economy of redemption. Let the Bible be their best book, and prayer their daily exercise. And let your parental care be stimulated and encouraged by the saying,—“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it.”^b And ye *Masters*, care for the souls of your servants. Every master should be the priest of his own household. Your dependants are providentially committed to your care, as ye are ministerially to our’s. Then let us be agreed to care for our respective charges “as those who must give account” of their stewardship to the one great and universal Lord of all. Give to your servants the Sabbath, and bring them with you to the House of Prayer. Second our labours: aid us in our all-important duties. “Let brotherly love

^a See Prov. xxii. 15.

^b Prov. xxii. 6.

continue," and all our *neighbours*, whom we can benefit, share our kind and zealous attention. Can we teach no poor child to read? Can we lend no one a religious book? Can we aid no charitable Institution? O, brethren, let our religion be the prevalence of love: then will the guardian care of our heavenly Master be extended over us, and the work given us to do, in his service, being accomplished, Jesus Christ will receive us in the day of his appearing, saying, "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

SERMON XIII.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER CONSIDERED.

1 CORINTHIANS XI. 24.

This do in remembrance of Me.

NOT until he had communicated “all things which he had heard and received of the Father”—not until he had invited “the weary and heavy laden” to himself, and proved his power “to forgive sin” and to “save unto the uttermost”—not until he had vanquished “the principalities and powers of darkness” and “triumphed openly over them in his cross,” did our adorable Redeemer “bow his head and yield up the ghost.” “*It is finished!*” was his dying exclamation. And what was finished? “The work which was given him to do”—the mighty and mysterious work of our redemption. Having accomplished this, our Lord just went down into the grave in order to sanctify the resting-place of his believing members—thence he quickly rose, made the clouds his chariot, and went to repossess “the glory

which he had with the Father before the world was.”
 “Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty; the Lord mighty in battle.”^a And now that our Lord Jesus Christ “hath overcome, and is seated with the Father on his throne,” can we suppose him forgetful of the conflict which he sustained on earth? Does he cease to remember Calvary? No; most surely not: as “a Lamb that *had been slain*” did he appear in the mystic visions of the Apocalypse to the beloved John. Should those, then, whose griefs he bare, and for whose sins he was “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,” be forgetful of his ‘agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion?’ Oh! no: and to aid our recollection of him and of the love wherewith he loved us, our Lord has appointed a solemn and peculiar ordinance: this ordinance we are enjoined to celebrate; and the command relating to it forms our text: “*This do in remembrance of Me.*” We will enquire,

I. What we are to do:

II. How we may worthily fulfil the injunction:

And III. What commonly are the excuses made for neglecting it.

Let us enquire

I. *What we are to do*:—

“*Do this*:” and what is *this* we are to do? We read, “The same night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took bread; and when he had given thanks, he blessed

^a Psalm xxiv. 7, 8.

it, and gave to his disciples, saying, Take, eat ; this is (to represent to you) my body, which is (to be) broken for you : do this in remembrance of me. Likewise also he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it : for this is (to represent to you) my blood, (which is) the blood of the New Covenant, and which is (to be) shed for many for the remission of sins : this do ye, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me."^a Thus was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained.—That it was to be a continued and repeated ordinance in the Christian Church is, we may *first* observe, plain : Our Lord's command is, "*Do this ;*" and he evidently wished and purposed its continuance, by saying, "*as oft*" as ye do it.—The *circumstances* under which the ordinance was instituted, are peculiarly interesting and affecting. It was night ; it was *the* night ; the night of the Lord's betrayal. Jesus sat with his few disciples gathered round him. They were witnessing the last words, the last looks, the last actions, of their beloved Master. Judas was covenanting to betray him : this Jesus knew, and intimated the same to the eleven. Sorrow filled their hearts, and the hour of their Lord's severest woe approached. Blood, and agony, and death awaited the resigned and lowly Saviour. He was about to sustain the burden of the world's atonement. "With strong cries and tears" was he now to contend for the recovery and salvation of our lost and perishing race. With this scene full before him, Jesus took the bread and cup and blessed them, and said to his mourning followers, "Eat ye, drink ye, all of these ; and this do ye in remembrance of Me." Perhaps the *elements of bread and wine* were chosen as being most easy to procure, and as being

^a Comp. Matt. xxvi. 26, with 1 Cor. xi. 23, &c.

also the most striking emblems of his body broken, and his soul poured out, for sin. As bread and wine nourish and sustain our animal nature, so do the body and blood of Christ nourish and sustain our spiritual and immortal life. Perhaps, too, the choice of these things rather than of others might be designed to shew the union which subsists between the faithful professors of Christianity. You know a loaf consists of grains once separate and apart one from the other, and wine is the produce of many grapes: so are all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity “one” in him and with each other. However wide apart may be the lands of their natural birth, and however different may be the outward forms of their religion, yet are they “all one in Christ,” and a communion of a very sweet and a gracious kind prevails among them.—The *design* of this sacred rite was especially to perpetuate the memory of our Saviour’s death. He knew how earthly our affections were, and how easily we forgot God: He knew, too, that our happiness would consist in the recollection of him and of his dying love: He therefore said, “*Do this*”—‘Do this, my people: I feel towards you a love that is unutterable: you shall not be forgotten of Me: pledges of my remembrance shall await your acceptance: I appoint this ordinance always to remind you of Me: you shall spiritually eat and drink my body and blood; and whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.’ Such then is the Ordinance we are commanded to observe. And shall we call this “*a hard saying?*” Shall we not rather willingly and gratefully *do* what Jesus Christ commands us in remembrance of him? Oh! if he had bidden us do some *great* thing, methinks we should have done it: how much more, then, when he says,—“Do this: eat ye, drink ye, in remembrance of Me!”

Let us now enquire

II. *How we may worthily fulfil the injunction :—*

Agreeably to the catechism of our Church, I remark there is required in those who partake of the communion, (1.) *Repentance towards God* : (2.) *Newness of life* : (3.) *Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ* : (4.) *Thankfulness for his death* : and (5.) *Charity with all men*.

And 1. *Repentance towards God*. By *repentance* is meant a wish to undo, if it were possible, what we have done amiss ; sincere sorrow for our fault, and unfeigned humiliation on account of it. This repentance has a particular reference *to God*, because it is *his* authority we have questioned, *his* law we have violated, *his* goodness and mercy we have disregarded. Hence holy Scripture describes it as a “*godly sorrow*” which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. This is the repentance which we need in order to sit acceptably at the Lord's table. “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.” It is “the broken and contrite heart” which God doth not despise. This brokenness and contrition of heart is the gift of Jesus Christ, and the fruit of the Spirit's operation on our minds.^a And are there *none* to whom I speak who “sorrow after this godly sort ?”—*none* to whom the grace of repentance and the spirit of truth have been imparted ?—*none* who “abhor themselves and repent in dust and ashes ?” O yes, I trust there are some poor prodigals among you coming to themselves, and purposing in the bitterness of their disappointed hopes to arise and to return unto their Father—some self-condemned publicans “standing afar off,” not daring so much as to look heaven-ward, but smiting upon their

^a See Acts v. 31. John xvi. 8.

breasts, and crying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner”—some weeping Magdalens who would fain wash a Saviour’s feet with their tears. Well, then, you have the *first* thing required in us worthily to eat of that bread and to drink of that cup of which Christ invites you to partake. But there is required

2. *Newness of life.* It is newness of life which alone evidences our repentance to be genuine and sincere. If repentance be an earnest desire to undo, if it were possible, what we have done amiss, we shall not surely love to repeat the fault. This I wish you particularly to observe, because the repentance of the generality of persons allows them to live on in sin: than which no clearer proof can be afforded of the falseness and inutility of their professed penitence. When Jesus Christ bestows sensibility of conscience and tender sorrow for sin, he disposes the sinner utterly to “abhor that which is evil.” “Hunger and thirst after righteousness” mark invariably the presence and grace of the Eternal Spirit. In whomsoever this hunger and thirst are produced, there will be a steadfast purpose and endeavour to “perfect holiness in the fear of God.” “The flesh” indeed will “lust against the spirit;” but, in its turn, the spirit will lust against the flesh.^a And though a truly penitent person cannot always “do the things which he would,” yet is there a determination of mind within him to “take heed to his ways and to rule himself after God’s Word.”^b And is it not the purpose and desire of some of you, Beloved, to amend your lives, and to evince the reality of your repentance by “fruits meet for it?”—Then have you the *second* thing you need worthily to fulfil the commandment of Jesus Christ. There is required

^a Gal. v. 17.

^b Psalm cxix. 9.

3. *Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.* The Spirit testifies of Jesus, and “this is God’s commandment that we believe on his Son Jesus Christ.” The *means* of faith are, hearing the Word and prayer.^a In their use, “the mourner in Zion” lays hold—tremblingly, it may be, at first—on Christ, is led gradually to “rejoice in hope,” and eventually is enabled to see how suited to his necessities is the Saviour God has given him. ‘God’s mercy through Christ’ is the object of his confidence, and the ground whereon the sole of his foot finds rest. Therein his faith, however lively, becomes, by habitual exercise, livelier still. Christ is received as he is revealed. The believing penitent regards him as his Prophet to instruct, his Priest to atone, and his King to rule over and within him. By faith we “put on,” “walk in,” “live on,” “joy in,” Jesus Christ. It is the grace which bears a peculiar reference to a worthy reception of the Lord’s Supper. “The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and a spiritual manner; and the *mean* whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is *faith*.”^b None receive the Communion rightly, or worthily, who do not *with faith* receive the same. “The wicked and such as be void of a lively faith, although they may visibly and carnally press with their teeth (as Augustine says) the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet *in no wise* are *they* partakers of Christ.”^c It is faith that discerns the Lord’s body, looks through and beyond the shadow to the substance, through and beyond the sign to the object signified. ‘The Faithful’ alone are really partakers of it: but, “all men have not faith,” and it may be some to whom I speak are doubtful whether their faith be “the faith of (or *by*,

^a Rom. x. 17. Luke xvii. 5.^b Art. xxviii.^c Art. xxix.

more properly) the operation of God," or that mere notional assent of many persons which avails nothing whatever to the peace and safety of the soul. But do you *wish* rightly to believe? Use ye the means of faith? *Would* you obey the first and great commandment of the Gospel? Would you work *that* work which of all other works is the greatest in itself and the noblest in its consequences?—*would you BELIEVE on Jesus Christ?*^a Feel you *any* obligation to a dying Saviour, and do you wish to experience *more*? If you *WOULD*, you clearly possess a measure of gracious faith: and though it may be "weak" and "small as a grain of mustard seed," yet the inviting voice of Mercy is, "Come unto Me." We conclude, then, you have the *third* thing required worthily to do what Jesus Christ commands you. But there is required

4. *Thankfulness for his death.* And can this be wanting where there is an unaffected sorrow for sin; a sincere purpose to avoid it in future and a lively faith in Christ our Saviour? If a fellow creature do us an act of kindness, how commonly do we feel our mind pervaded with a pleasing sense of gratitude! And shall we feel less in the contemplation of a Saviour's everlasting kindness towards us? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friends*:" but, "while we were yet *sinner*s, in due time, Christ died for the *ungodly*." Then, how great must his love be! And shall not a Redeemer's love, and that love demonstrated in laying down his life for our sakes, excite our gratitude?—The ordinance which commemorates 'the exceeding great love of our Lord and only Master,' requires our 'most humble and hearty thanks to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for

^a John vi. 29.

the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man, and the redemption of the world thereby : and it is while we surround his board that, with more than usual fervency, we would say, " Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits : Who forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thy diseases : Who redeemed thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercy." And feel you nothing of this adoring thankfulness? I know you feel not a thousandth part so thankful as you should feel : but is it in your heart to say, ' O Lord, I *would* praise thee ?' Then come and welcome to the supper of your Lord,—come and welcome to that gracious Saviour who will meet you with the words—" Thou didst well in that it was in thine heart" to thank me. With this disposition of mind you have the *fourth* thing required in order worthily to do what your Lord commands you in remembrance of him. The last thing required is

5. *Charity with all men.* The Communion of the body and blood of Christ is a Feast of love. No enmity must approach to mar its harmony. " If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way : *first* be reconciled to thy brother, and *then* come and offer thy gift." But there cannot, surely, be love to the Lord Jesus Christ and an unkindly feeling towards a brother prevalent in the same bosom together. No : the one would extirpate the other. It pertains to the Christian to " love his enemies ; to do good to them that hate him ; and to pray for them which despitefully use him and persecute him." Nor is it an insuperable difficulty with him to do so. He is *disposed* to do it, and it is matter of un-

feigned joy when he can “overcome evil with good,” and by heaping coals of fire (that is, winning and softening kindnesses) upon his head, he can make a foe his friend. The religion of Jesus is a religion of mercy. “God is Love;” and the children of God are but radiations of the Divine benevolence. They will embrace *all* men in their kindly regards; and should an *enemy* hunger, they will feed him; if he thirst, they will give him drink. Those of you who would do so, possess the *fifth* and final thing you need to come worthily to the Supper of the Lord.

Where, then, there is repentance towards God, newness of life, faith in Jesus Christ, thankfulness for his death, and charity with all men, there is *What is required in us worthily to partake of this holy Communion.*

We have now to enquire

III. and finally, *What commonly are the excuses made for neglecting it.*

These are many and various. We shall notice only those which most commonly prevail. And here let me say, Mark, Beloved, the several excuses as we name them, and see which of them is your own.

Much business and occupation is a plea with many persons for their neglect of the Lord's Supper. But is this excuse allowable? May a man innocently give “all diligence”—to provide for the temporal wants of himself and family rather than—“to make his calling and election sure?” Is it impossible to be at the same time “diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord?” “Will it profit you to gain the whole world” at the sacrifice of your peace and of your salvation? May you take this plea with you to the judgment-seat

of Christ? Would it avail you any service there? No: and better had a man forego a part, at least, of his worldly care and toil, rather than not do what Jesus Christ commands him.

We do not feel that perfect charity towards all men which we ought to feel, is another common excuse. You should muse, then, on the love of Jesus Christ till the fire of a reciprocal affection be enkindled in your bosoms, and thereby every "root of bitterness" be consumed. What! shall we be forgiven our ten thousand talents, and yet refuse to forgive a fellow-debtor ten? "Why do ye not rather take wrong?" Our gracious Saviour loved us while we were yet his enemies; he "was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth" to say he felt no charity towards mankind. He prayed for his murderers. Restrain then and lament that unholy propensity of our sinful nature to retain implacably a sense of injury. Look unto the cross: think Who hung thereon: feel your obligations to a dying Saviour, and then refuse to be in perfect charity with all men *if you can*.

Another excuse is, *We are not worthy to come to the Communion*. If your acceptance there depended on personal merit, this excuse might with some propriety be pleaded. But it *does not* do so. 'We do not presume to come to our Redeemer's Table trusting in our own righteousness.' The more deeply and sensibly we are acquainted with the depravity of our heart and our consequent unworthiness, the more fit are we for this and every other means of grace. It is the sick man who needs a Physician. Jesus Christ cannot heal those who deem themselves already whole. He is the Saviour of "sinners:" it is *them* he calls "to repentance," and in *them* alone can he see "of the travail of his soul." The (spiritually) "poor, and maimed, and halt, and

blind," he invites to his Supper. "The (spiritually) naked, and miserable, and wretched," he "counsels to buy of him gold tried in the fire and white raiment, that they may be rich and clothed." And so peculiarly gracious and merciful is the Lord, that he sells the privileges and hopes of his kingdom "*without* money and *without* price" on the part of "the poor and destitute." We fear, however, that where the excuse of unworthiness is most strongly urged for a neglect of this Sacrament, there, generally, the least unworthiness is felt. It is the torn garment through which the heart's duplicity appears. Whereas, for the really unworthy, the sensibly sinful, "all things are ready," and the servants of the Lord are abroad to say, "Come to the feast."

Others again say, *They are afraid of not being able, after receiving the Communion, to live up, as they express it, to what they profess.* Now I mean not to say that fear, under proper restriction and regulation, does not conduce to watchfulness and diligence, and that it becomes not professors of religion to "walk circumspectly:" but the fear which many plead as excusing their approach to the Lord's Table, is ill-timed and unnecessary. Do they fear not 'living up to' the sentiments of the Lord's Prayer, or any other of the many beautiful prayers of our Church? You call God your 'Father;' Jesus Christ your 'Lord;' and pray for 'the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.' You profess to believe in each person of the eternal Trinity, and to 'give yourselves up' to the service of the one Jehovah—and *that* at all times and in every service of the Church: Can you do more than this in partaking of the Lord's Supper? Depend upon it, there is no more professed in a participation of this Sacrament, than there is every time you say, "Our Father which art in Heaven." If in

the "Spirit of adoption," you can call God your Father, and you would "walk with" him, dependent on his goodness, power, and love, "as dear children," the body and blood of Christ will so strengthen and refresh your souls as to enable you to "keep yourselves unspotted from the world," and to maintain a conversation in it "according to the Gospel of Christ."

An excuse of another kind—not often indeed made in words, but often, we believe, latent in the heart, is, *We must live and act differently from what we now do, if we receive the Sacrament.* We do most certainly expect a consistent life and conduct in those who keep the Christian Passover. We can allow no flagrant sin in a professed disciple of Jesus Christ to remain unrebuked. But those who do not live agreeably to the Word and Will of God, most conclusively evince that they have no real love to his Word and Will in their hearts. If you love sin, and be unwilling to have your enjoyment of it restrained, you cannot be 'meet partakers of God's holy Table.' And if you live in sin,—it is the word of Jesus Christ himself,—*ye shall die in it*, and that, observe, whether you partake of the Lord's Supper or not. A *forced* participation of it, is a mockery of its Founder and a profanation of the ordinance. No *unwilling* guest can be a welcome one. We ask not, then, *your* presence there till you feel the exceeding sinfulness of your state, and are desirous to "be holy as He which hath called you is holy."

The excuse of others is, *Some do take the Sacrament, who do not, as you conceive, live accordingly ; this hinders your participation of it.* An inconsistent profession of religion is lamentable in any person. But, I ask, are we the judge of inconsistent professors? Are they to stand or fall at our tribunal? Because some do ill, is that to afford a pretext for your not doing better?

Perhaps while you are censuring and condemning them, they are renewing their attendance at the Lord's Table and repeating their supplications for grace and strength whereby to controul their passions and to subdue their iniquities. Without, by any means, apologizing for inconsistent conduct in religious professors, we do yet think it to be the bounden duty of all who desire to keep up a lively sense of God's mercy in Christ, to commemorate the Saviour's dying love; and however negligently others may act, to lose no opportunity of avowing ourselves to be on the Lord's side. If, then, the lives of others offend you—be ye yourselves purer and more brilliant “lights” in the world, and let us “take knowledge of *you*, that *ye* have been with Jesus,” by your “abounding in every good word and work.”

A further excuse which a few individuals make for neglecting the ordinance is, *The unworthiness of their Minister*. ‘Our Minister (say they) is so and so, and does so and so; and we cannot, therefore, comfortably receive the Sacrament at his hands.’ Where this remark is founded in truth, it is certainly a most painful circumstance. It does confessedly detract from the pleasure of the ordinance: but, be it observed, “the *effect* of the ordinance is not taken away by the wickedness of a Minister, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as rightly and by faith do receive the sacraments ministered unto them; which be effectual because of Christ's institution and promise, *although* they be ministered by evil men.”^a A Minister's unworthiness, then, cannot be allowed to a people as an excuse for their neglect of the Lord's Supper. The mantle of pity should be thrown over the failures of the *man*, and the *office* of the Minister be respected. The great

^a Art. xxvi.

“Master of the Feast,” is still, by his Word and Spirit, among his believing followers “as one that serveth.” “*THOU meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness:—those that remember thee in thy ways.*” And “*while the KING sitteth at his table,*” well may “the spikenard” of his guests “send forth the smell thereof” in its sweetest and most grateful odours.

But another and frequent excuse for delay is, *We mean to come, but we must make ourselves more fit for the ordinance before we can partake of it comfortably.* “The preparation of the heart in man is from the Lord.” Make yourselves spiritually better you cannot; you have no ability to do so: and even admitting that you possessed the power, and could make yourselves fit to receive the Sacrament as you conceive, it would be like healing yourselves, if ye were sick, and then going to a physician for advice. This excuse will commonly be found the excuse of ignorance and negligence. When any *really* FEEL that there is ‘no health in them,’ that they are INDEED unholy and ‘miserable sinners,’ they are just in that very state of mind in which alone they can receive “health and cure.” “The weary and heavy-laden” Jesus invites to come to him; and whosoever cometh thus weary of sin and heavy-laden with its guilt, Jesus will in no wise “cast out” or “send empty away.”

The excuse we have reserved finally to notice, is one which, perhaps, of all others most commonly prevails, *If we eat and drink unworthily, we shall eat and drink damnation to ourselves.* Words similar to these, you will find in the chapter whence our text is taken. They are truly weighty and solemn in their import; but, I apprehend, much mistake prevails about that import. The term “damnation” as found in 1 Cor. chap. xi. and as used also in the Communion service of the

Church, does not mean the pains of eternal death or damnation literally ; it merely signifies *judgment* or chastisement ; and is so rendered in the marginal reading of the 30th. ver. The Corinthians proceeded to the celebration of the Ordinance in an unbecoming manner. “For in eating, every one taketh before other his own Supper ; remarks the Apostle ; and one is hungry and another is drunken ;” alluding to the *social suppers* of the Greeks, wherein the guests brought each his own provisions, and at which great excesses sometimes prevailed. This surely was “not to discern the Lord’s body.” It was a profanation of the holy Eucharist : “*For this cause,*” continues St. Paul, “many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” Thus were these offending Professors of christianity judged or chastened for their irregular conduct, and the reason assigned for God’s fatherly correction is,—“If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged ; but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that *we should not* be condemned with the world.” The judgment or chastisement inflicted upon the Corinthians was *in order to* their deliverance from an irremediable and final condemnation. How needlessly then do many of our people trouble themselves about eating and drinking their own damnation ! *We* cannot eat and drink unworthily after the manner of the Greeks. *Now* therefore, if any eat and drink unworthily, it is when they eat and drink ignorantly, or formally, and for some mere secular end or worldly interest—without penitence, without faith, without thankfulness, without love, without, in short, a free and entire surrender of themselves to the service and glory of God. Where any are really apprehensive of danger, and do fear to receive unworthily, let them consult their Minister, or some judicious friend. They would then soon learn

how futile and unnecessary is the excuse we are noticing. There are numbers who "live without God in the world," and whose religion—if it may be called *religion* at all—consists in mere exterior decency of character, who yet fear no 'damnation.' Speak to them of the Communion, and tell them Jesus Christ said, "Do this"—'O they dare not do it; they fear they shall eat and drink damnation to themselves.' Be it, however, remembered that *any* sin unrepented of and unremitted through the sacrifice of the death of Christ, will assuredly condemn a sinner. And I will leave it with you to judge whether an habitual neglect of the Communion be not an habitual violation of a plain command.

Such, then, are the excuses commonly made for neglecting the Lord's Supper. I confess, I feel ashamed to have noticed so many. That there should be any unwillingness whatever to comply with the dying request of a Redeemer, strongly evinces the ingratitude of the human heart. That Redeemer only desires our happiness in our remembrance of him; and yet how many do wilfully forget him, and even presume to extenuate their sinful negligence! Surely when the words "Do this in remembrance of Me," meet their eye or tingle in their ear, they must feel a sentence of guiltiness and condemnation thrill through their consciences.

We have now enquired, What we are to do when our Lord and Saviour says, *Do this*: How we may worthily fulfil this injunction; and What are, commonly, the excuses made for neglecting it. I would only further ADD

1. A word of *Caution*.

To any of you who are about to communicate for

the first time, I would say, Guard against every thing like distrustful fear. You have indeed been “children of disobedience,” but ye are invited to receive the visible symbols of a Father’s pardon and a Father’s blessing. “Ye are not coming unto the mount (Sinai) that might not be touched, and that burned with fire; nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest:—but ye are coming unto mount Zion, the city of the living God, the new Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, who are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling.” Ye are to be no longer “aliens,” but “fellow-citizens with the saints.” Sinful ye may be; but there is virtue sufficient in the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse you from all sin. Come, then, to the communion of his body and blood *humbly, not doubtingly*. Come as she came who washed her Saviour’s feet with her tears, and that Saviour will receive you quite as graciously as he received the Magdalen. Look to him as the dying Thief upon the cross, and say, “Lord, remember me!” He will smile in mercy on you and say, “*I do earnestly remember thee; and thou shalt not be forgotten of Me.*” Pray him to give you “a cool spirit;” and with a mind serious, humble, contrite, composed, come to the Supper. As to any ‘Preparation-books,’ there are few you can use with advantage. At the time of celebration, they do but distract and divide the attention of the Communicant, in general. We would rather the Communion-Service of the Church should be carefully meditated. Sink but into the depths of its penitential confessions, and rise but to the fervour of its praise, and you will find it the best Preparation-book we can recommend.

In the *spirit* of its Service, you shall not be other than worthy partakers of this holy Table. To this word of caution, I will add,

2. A word of *Advice* :

To those who have communicated already, and regularly do partake of this holy Sacrament, I say, Trim the lamp of your profession afresh : Gird up anew the loins of your mind : Seek to be 'full-filled with the grace and heavenly benediction' of your Lord. "He giveth *more* grace ;" "ask and receive that your joy may be full." "Be careful to give no offence in any thing." Seeing how desirous some persons appear to find an excuse for *their* negligence in the misconduct of their *fellow-creatures*, "be sober, be vigilant," and earnestly solicitous to "cut off occasion from those who seek occasion" to slander you and to extenuate their own faults. "By *well*-doing, put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Let it gladden your hearts to see others that were once "afar off, brought nigh by the blood of Jesus." Welcome them to the common Table of the same Master. "Love as Brethren ; be pitiful ; be courteous : " and the God of love make the remembrance of Christ's death a source of ever-continually increasing pleasure and benefit to your souls !

To Him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XIV.

PARTICIPATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER IMPROVED.

PSALM CXVI. 12.

*What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits
toward me ?*

WHEN the Heavens and the Earth were made, and all the host of them, God *rested*. The mighty energy of the eternal mind, had produced the material Universe. With feelings of Divine complacency, “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Thus (in a degree vastly inferior, we must, indeed, allow; but *thus*) it is with ourselves. When our attention, strength, or time, has been occupied about any thing more than usually important, there is a disposition in the human mind to affect repose; and either to enjoy the satisfaction of having accomplished our object or to anticipate the result of our labour. This disposition I assume to be prevalent amongst you at this moment. You have been doing a great work: You have been making a public avowal of your faith in a crucified Redeemer: Angels and men, yea, the Lord

of both, have witnessed your “professed subjection” to Jesus Christ: With holy solemnity you have taken “the cup of salvation and called upon the Name of the Lord.” Now, then, you pause: You look upward to the world where your Redeemer dwells, and you feel, perhaps, that to depart and to be with Christ, would be “far better” than to sojourn longer here: You look inward on yourselves, and behold, with humble and adoring thankfulness, what great things God hath done for you: Contented, if it be his will to “abide in the flesh” and therein to serve your day and generation, you look around you here and enquire how you shall best fulfil your duties; how most consistently “pay that ye have vowed;” how most effectually, amidst the necessary cares and businesses of life, keep alive the ardour of affection which divine grace has kindled within you; how, in short, you may “adorn in *all* things the Doctrine of God our Saviour.” In this state of calm tranquillity and sober joy, the question—“*What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?*”—naturally presents itself. Accommodating the text to our purpose, let us consider

I. The benefits connected with a due reception of the Lord's Supper.

And II. The duties immediately resulting from our participation of it.

We are to consider

I. *The BENEFITS connected with a due reception of the Lord's Supper.*

These are great and estimable. We mean not to say they are necessarily derivable from a participation of

the Ordinance : The Ordinance is appointed for ‘*the Faithful*’ only ; and by the Faithful only are ‘the body and blood of Christ verily and indeed taken and received in the Lord’s Supper.’ To those, then, who *worthily* partake of it, there is derived

(1.) *A stronger faith.* In our present state of imperfect being, we are creatures of sense. Any thing visible and tangible, therefore, makes a much more durable impression on our minds than mere abstract truths or spiritual things. Hence, when we *see* the bread broken and the wine poured out, we can more sensibly realize the facts implied—the body and blood of Jesus Christ broken and poured out for sin. Our faith becomes “the evidence of things not seen.” And as we exercise it on the work, the life, the death, the resurrection, and the love of Jesus Christ, our faith “*grows*,” and, in some favoured seasons, it “*grows exceedingly*.” The Holy Spirit especially blesses meditation on “the *cross* of Christ” to our “furtherance and joy of faith.” Like as Abraham after he had offered the ram in sacrifice in the stead of his Son, was “strong in faith, giving glory to God ;” so the Christian Worshipper, after a worthy participation of the commemorative Supper of the Lord, “waxes stronger and stronger.” He becomes more simply and entirely dependent upon “the *dying* of the Lord Jesus.” With lessening hesitation he grounds his eternal all upon the atonement of the Son of God. He herein receives evident and sensible pledges of his Saviour’s love. His faith becomes to him “a substance”—a felt reality, the worth of which is “*far* more precious than of gold that perisheth.” This is one benefit connected with a believing participation of the body and blood of our Saviour, Christ.

Another is (2.) *A more full persuasion of the Divine favour.* Some persons say we cannot be persuaded of

the Divine favour in this life, and that as to an inward perception of God's love towards us and our acceptance with him, it is all visionary and enthusiastic. But what says St. Paul?—"I am *persuaded* that neither life nor death—shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And what mean we when we pray for 'such a *sense* of God's mercies,' as will fill our hearts with thankfulness, and dispose us unreservedly to serve and honour Him? When, by the Holy Spirit's quickening and enlightening energy, we become sensible of our sinfulness and aware of our desert, we are ready almost to conclude, "There is no hope." We struggle, however, for deliverance: we "*hope* even against hope:" and under the gracious guidance and efficacious influence of the Spirit, our trembling hope gradually ripens into sweet persuasion: and when, by faith, we take the holy Sacrament, this persuasion becomes more full and general. We learn to "*joy in God.*" Our conviction of his favour becomes as real and perceptible to our souls, as the kindness of any earthly friend would be to our bodily senses. We "walk in love;" and though all beside should frown upon us, yet the smile of a "reconciled Father in Christ" would make us gladsome and happy.

A further benefit will consequently be (3.) *An increase of love to Jesus Christ and to each other.* We are *naturally* averse to Jesus Christ: no one, in an unrenewed state, cordially wills that this man should reign over him: it is, too, the Enemy's great effort to keep us apart from Christ and ignorant of him. But, when we have found pardon and peace through his blood, how can we but desire and love him? Now, it is in the Communion of his body and blood that Jesus Christ, in a more peculiar and gracious manner, presents himself to our acceptance

and regard. Our mind's eye sees him "led away to be crucified:" we follow him in thought to Calvary: we behold him suspended there between the Heavens and the Earth, as though he were an outcast from both; his hands and feet and head are lacerated and torn with wounds; his body is besmeared with blood, and his soul is the seat of agony and grief unutterable. "Lovest thou me?" seems to be the enquiry wherewith this scene is pregnant: "Lord," our grateful hearts reply, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that we love thee." And this love, though it falls, confessedly, far short of what we owe a dying Saviour, will yet, we trust, be increased in us ever more and more. And to *each other*, also, we feel increasingly attached, as partakers together of that "one bread." The bond of union with our Head and with the Church of Christ becomes closer and dearer on each participation of the sacred Supper. We learn to "love as brethren" and to walk as "heirs together of the grace of life." We are children of the same Father; lovers of the same Lord; partakers of the same Spirit; and beyond us lies the same glorious resurrection and eternal life. A savour of Christian piety will mark the character and the converse of every worthy communicant. A radiance of simple unaffected kindness will beam around him, similar somewhat to the glory which shone in Moses' face after he had been communing with God on Horeb.

Another benefit connected with a due reception of the Lord's Supper is, (4.) *More deadness to the World*. To those who know how duly to value it, this is no small favour. Alive as we naturally are to all affairs of a temporal kind that concern us, it is a blessing indeed to have our affections deadened to things below, and our minds drawn up and centred in higher and more enduring good. A devout participation of the

Sacrament is well calculated to produce this desirable effect. When we worthily partake of it, in heart and mind, we thither ascend whither our Saviour Christ is gone before : We enter, by the blood of Jesus, into the holiest of all ; and from a contemplation of "things not seen as yet," we become, in a measure, weaned in affection and desire from things visible and temporal. Mere earthly advantages and pursuits, will be valued only just so far as our own or others' good and our Redeemer's glory can be promoted by them. We learn what that meaneth, "I am crucified unto the world and the world is crucified unto me." We stand like the Virgin Mother gazing on our crucified Redeemer, and his cross induces our crucifixion to all beside himself. It is true, we still have cares, and must fulfil our relative and social duties ; but our expectations and desires will be on the wing for some holier kindlier state than this. We shall long to "eat bread with our Lord in his Father's kingdom," and wish rather to know all the blessedness to be derived from "the marriage-Supper of the Lamb" in the day of his manifestation in power and great glory. Those of you who are at all experimentally acquainted with religion, will allow that in so saying, "I speak forth the words of truth and soberness ;" and that deadness of feeling towards this present world, by whatever means promoted, is a truly valuable benefit.

Another benefit we may observe is, (5.) *Greater courage in our Christian profession.* We are, in the earlier stages of our spiritual life particularly, exceedingly timid. I have known many who have wished to reprove an open sin, to confess Christ and their attachment to him, and to recommend religion to the adoption and practice of others ; who yet dared not, through fear and timidity, so to do. Modesty, humility, and meek-

ness, are commendable in all, and peculiarly amiable in youthful Christians; but these graces of the Spirit must not be confounded with “shame of Christ and of his words.” Circumstances often occur which render a courageous profession of our faith absolutely necessary, and wherein reserve would be criminal. Now, a participation of the Lord’s Supper is a public avowal of our faith. We therein renew our baptismal engagement to ‘fight manfully under the banner of Christ:’ our enemies themselves expect us to be true to our Lord, and faithful to our vows. In the recollection of this, we “wax valiant in fight,” and become better qualified and enabled to “give to every man that asketh, a reason of the hope that is in us.” This is a great benefit. It tends considerably to relieve the mind of painful apprehension, and we lose that unhappy dread which a fear of our Redeemer’s being ashamed of us must necessarily, where it exists, produce. Thus we learn to be “good soldiers of Jesus Christ;” and, varying the expression a little, we may say,—“They that have used this ordinance well, purchase to themselves—great boldness in the Faith.”

Connected with the foregoing benefit, there will be (6.) *A stronger confidence in duty.* Superiority to both the censure and approval of man is very desirable. It should be “a small matter with us to be judged of *man’s* judgment.” And yet how common is it even with persons whose piety we cannot question, to be afraid of their duty! They love, it may be, the great and useful Societies of our land; and would, too, most willingly attend their Meetings; but they dread being reputed for singularity. They worship God in their families; but a stranger’s presence will interrupt the duty. This sinful diffidence, a believing participation of the Communion tends to remove. The body and blood of Christ

strengthen the soul. We become ashamed of our shame. The promise—"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength,"—is fulfilled to us. We "cease from *Man*:" neither his smiles nor frowns do greatly move us. We cease from *ourselves*: "having no confidence in the flesh, we rejoice in Christ Jesus." Our duty becomes our pleasure; and now "though an host encamp against us, our heart shall not fear: though war should rise against us, in this will we be confident."

And with all the benefits already specified, there will be (7.) *A more assured hope of heavenly glory.* In the Communion, we contemplate our Lord not only as "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities," but also as "entered within the vail," and appearing there as the High Priest of our profession, and presently to re-appear the second time as the triumphant Conqueror of all our foes, and the almighty Deliverer of the Church. We receive these fresh pledges of his love, and renewed assurances of his mercy, until his coming again. Sweetly sound the words of promise, "I will come again and receive you to myself: because I live, ye shall live: where I am, ye shall be." Our Saviour tells us he is gone to "prepare a place for us." What will be the peculiar excellency of that place, we know but partially. We know, however, that JESUS CHRIST is preparing it: and where the Prince of glory, "the Heir of all things," "the only begotten of the Father," dwells, must surely be a place "beautiful for situation," and replete with blessedness. Whilst we remain here, 'means of grace' are given to us to confirm our 'hope of glory.' Some, indeed, disapprove the mention of *assurance*: but had there been any thing injurious in it, would the Scriptures have enjoined us to "shew the same diligence to the *full assurance of hope* unto the end?" or should we

read, as we do in Colossians ii. 2, of *assurance*, *full* assurance, *riches* of the full assurance, and *all* riches of the full assurance? Certainly not. The more simply, truly, and gratefully, we “discern the Lord’s body” in the Ordinance of his appointment, and depend on that Lord himself, the more settled and established will our hope become. “The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and *assurance for ever.*”

Then—A stronger faith—A more full persuasion of the Divine favour—An increase of love to Jesus Christ and to each other—More deadness to the world—Greater courage in our Christian profession—A stronger confidence in duty—and A more assured hope of heavenly glory, are, we conceive, the special benefits connected with a due reception of the Lord’s Supper. And if so, with how much propriety may the Believer ask, “WHAT shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?”

Let us, then, consider

II. *The DUTIES immediately resulting from our participation of it.*

We should not shrink from a consideration of our duties: for though “without Christ, we can do nothing;” yet “through his strengthening us, we may do all things.” The benefits of our Lord toward us, when apprehended and experienced, will make our returns of love and service easy and delightful. An affectionate child will feel it to be his “meat and drink” to do his Father’s will. One that truly loves his Lord, will cheerfully keep his sayings.

It is, then, our duty, as immediately consequent upon our participation of the Lord's Supper,

(1.) *To mortify sin.* It should not satisfy us to fell the *branches* of the corrupt tree ; we should be solicitous to lay the axe to its *root*. The very *remains* of sin should be hateful to us ; and *will* be hateful to us if we believe our sins to be the thorns, the nails, the spear, which lacerated and pierced our Lord. We are not forgiven to go and sin again. No ; *this* is not the ungrateful return we are to render unto the Lord for his forgiving and redeeming mercy. Sin in its every kind and degree must be mortified. The very "*appearance of evil*" must be avoided. Even in things that are lawful and allowable, self-denial must sometimes be exercised. This will be found a successful means whereby more easily to overcome things that are unlawful. "All things," said Paul, "are lawful for me ; but all things are not expedient ;" and this great Apostle himself felt it necessary to "keep under his body," lest, after all his acquirements and enjoyments, "he should be a castaway." Let then the most gifted and experienced among you make no truce with sin ; but see to it that sin has no dominion over you. Wage with it a ceaseless and perpetual warfare. Mortify and lament your sin of heart, of lip, and life, till you are "presented faultless before the presence of God." Pray ye that the body and blood of your Lord, may indeed make clean your sinful bodies and souls, and that in both, through them, ye may be preserved unto everlasting life—"blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

(2.) *To renounce the world*, is another duty incumbent on us as partakers of the Lord's Supper. I do not believe it possible to be really religious, and cordially to love the world. By *the world*, I do not mean the

scenery of Nature—that is beautiful and charming; nor do I mean that we should not endeavour honourably to attain, and gratefully to enjoy, if possessed, a worldly competency: but I mean that we should not be the slaves of sense, or the friends of a world whose god is the devil, and whose votaries are not only “earthly and sensual” in their aims, pursuits, and pleasures, but (as an inspired Apostle would say) “devilish.” There is little in the world suited to the taste of one who ‘verily and indeed’ feeds in his heart by faith on Christ Jesus. Let us not, then, by any undue compliances, sanction the ways and follies of it. We have professedly renounced them: let us sincerely do so. “Ephraim should say, What have I any more to do with idols?”^a Shall I pretend to celebrate a feast to Jehovah, and forthwith go with the multitude to dance and shout around the altar of an idol-god?^b Shall I through fear of “man that is a worm,” sacrifice my Christian character, my peace of conscience, yea, more, “crucify my Lord, the Son of God, afresh?”—With regard, too, to our worldly circumstances, it is our duty “in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content.” God bids us to be “careful for nothing.” It is his to provide; and whatever his provision for our temporal wants may be, it should be our’s humbly and gratefully to enjoy it. Those of us who do worthily partake of the Communion of the body and blood of Christ, have “meat to eat which the world knoweth not of.” In the strength of this food should we go from conquering to conquer, cheered and encouraged in all our conflicts by the oft-repeated words—“To him that overcometh”—“To him that overcometh!” Only let us remember *why* our Redeemer suffered, and it will be no painful duty to renounce the world.^c

^a Hos. xiv. 8.^b Exod. xxxii. 5, 6.^c Gal. i. 4.

(3.) *To walk by faith*, is another duty following immediately upon the one just noticed. If we are to renounce *this* world, with all its idle pomp and vanity, it behoves us to live and walk by faith in "*another, that is, an heavenly country.*" The King; the righteousness; the glory; the joy; the pure and unmingled pleasure, of that heavenly country, should all be the objects of our believing regard and hope. If by partaking of the holy Supper our faith has been increased and strengthened, it is that we might exercise it the more. The established Believer feels and enjoys what younger disciples in the school of Christ have little conception of. What one, however, has attained, others may attain. And what though eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him? God, nevertheless, revealeth them to us by his Spirit: and a spiritual perception of *them* will cast a shade over all sublunary things, and quicken our desires after immortality. When the eyes of Elisha's servant were opened, he saw "horses of fire and chariots of fire" round about himself and his master, where previously he had seen nothing.^a And thus it is with ourselves also. When "the eyes of our understanding are enlightened," we discern what we never perceived before, and by this new and spiritual light, we pursue that upward way which leadeth unto a world of purity and blessedness. "We walk, says Paul, by faith, and not by sight;"^b and "the just, says he again, quoting the words of Habakkuk, shall live by his faith."^c The life which Paul himself lived in the flesh, after he became a Christian, was "by faith of Jesus Christ." Can we do better? Forgetting, then, the things that are behind, let us reach

^a 2 Kings vi. 17.

^b 2 Cor. v. 7.

^c Heb. x. 38.

forth to the things that are before, nor count ourselves to have attained while there remains any thing below the transmutation of our vile into the likeness of Christ's glorious body to be desired.

(4.) *To watch and pray*, is another plain and obvious duty as consequent on our approach to the Lord's Table. We stand not so habitually on our watch-tower as we should do. It is because we watch not, that we therefore so generally lose the fervour of our religion—the savour of our holy things, and fall so quickly into a cold and listless state of mind. If we would insure a *continuance* of the benefits we derive from the Communion, we must take heed unto our way. “Men ought alway to pray and not to faint.” Satan is always jealous of our happiness and watchful to destroy it. It is only by sobriety, vigilance, and prayer, that we can detect his subtilty and defeat his malice. ‘Restraining prayer, we cease to fight :’ our hands hang down ; our knees wax feeble ; and our armour becomes tarnished and useless. Prayer is the divinely appointed means of grace and strength to the soul—“the golden pipe” whereby the “unction of the Holy One” is conveyed into the believing heart. A *Christian* cannot but pray ; but he should be careful to “*pray always with ALL prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.*”^a The more we abound in watchful prayer, the more heavenly-minded and consequently the happier we shall be. Can we sin, can we be angry, can we successfully be tempted with evil, while our hearts are engaged in Communion and fellowship with God ? And will it not, if we enquire, be found that we *then* lose the zest of our mercies when we are watchless and prayerless ?—Then let us, in the ordi-

^a Eph. vi. 18.

nance of his appointment, think, at our every renewed participation of it, that we hear our Saviour say, "*What I say unto you, I say unto all, WATCH.*"

(5.) *To glorify Christ*, need I observe, is our duty? Surely it becomes—not the duty merely, but—the privilege of a forgiven and redeemed sinner to glorify his Redeemer. But, alas! how prone are we naturally to shun the cross! There is a strange backwardness in us to confess Christ and to avow ourselves to be his friends and followers. O let us seek to possess the *confidence* of faith and the *assurance* of hope in him! What! after an approach to his Table—after a declaration of our faith in his cross and passion as that ALONE whereby we obtain remission of sin and eternal life—after a surrender of ‘ourselves, our souls, and bodies’ to him and to his service, shall we hesitate or refuse to speak good of his Name? Can our faith, our persuasion of the Divine goodness, our love to Jesus Christ and to each other, our deadness to the world, our hope of glory, be increased and strengthened if we willingly neglect to glorify our Lord and Saviour? Let us, then, be agreed to honour Christ by the dependence of our heart, the praises of our mouth, and the obedience of our life. Let every benefit done toward us induce the enquiry, *What shall I render unto the Lord?* Let all his benefits together constrain us to resolve with David, “While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have my being.” “Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Make, at least, the *effort* to do so. Say to your fellow-men, “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together:” and if you feel diffident, or afraid to speak of the glorious honour of his Majesty, and of his wondrous works, cry, “*Open thou my lips,*” and you shall soon add,

“*And my mouth shew thy praise.*” After Supper, Jesus and his disciples “sung an hymn:” “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, let us sing and make melody in our hearts to the Lord.” So will the Lord be magnified in us, and he will graciously fulfil the promise, “Whoso confesseth me before men, him will I also confess before my Father and his Angels.”

We have now considered The benefits connected with a due reception of the Lord's Supper, and The duties immediately resulting from our participation of it. I will only further SAY

(1.) *To the Communicants among you*,—Meditate those particular benefits which God has bestowed upon you. Do so individually. The text, you observe, says, “What shall *I* render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward *me*?” You will then see what are your peculiar mercies, and be excited “according to your several ability” to render unto the Lord adoration, worship, and service. Whether your talents be ten, or five, or one, you will “neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” But, however graciously you may be blessed, I would say, Still be humble. Benefits, through our natural weakness and depravity, sometimes become snares. Remember Who maketh you to differ, and that there is nothing which you have not received. Beware of spiritual pride: it is a subtle sin, and easily creeps into the heart. On the other hand, Envy not one the other's gifts. You should not wish to be like one another; at least, only just so far as you resemble Christ. Your Lord is your Exemplar: *his* steps you are to follow. You may profitably speak one to another of your joys and sorrows; your hopes and fears. You may, too, reprove a brother when reproof is needed; but only

“with meekness and in the spirit of love.” Pray *with* and *for* each other, you also may ; and so keep alive among you the power and vigour of religious principle. Now you have presented yourselves to the Lord, ye may go forth in dependence on his aid, to the fulfilment of every Christian duty—enquiring, as ye go, in the secrecy of believing thought, and in the calmness of a felt devotion, “What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me ?” and determined to do what in you lies for Him who has done so much for you.

(2.) *To the non-communicants among you*, I say, What are you rendering to the Lord for all his benefits ? It is to no purpose as it respects you that God hath “made a marriage for his Son,” and sent his servants to say, “Come, for all things are now ready.” You excuse your coming ; yea, more, it may be, you condemn the feast, and despise those who partake of it. But, let me ask, Will your farm or your oxen or your intimacies with the world, avail you any thing without the pardoning love and mercy of your God ? Be assured, repent and believe you *must* if ever you would be saved. I wish, at your leisure, you would read and consider Luke xiii. and 3, and Mark xvi. and 16.—Love the Lord Jesus Christ you *must*, and evidence also your love by keeping his sayings you *must*, or you will never “see the felicity of his chosen and rejoice in the gladness of his people.” Look at 1 Cor. xvi. 22, and John xiv. 15.—We pity our ‘enemies, persecutors, and slanderers ; and pray our God to turn their hearts.’ O that your hearts may be turned, and that ye may render henceforward according to the benefits done toward you !

SERMON XV.

DEATH TO THE BELIEVER: WHAT?

ACTS VII. 60.

And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” In the gift of his only begotten Son, God’s promise of a Seed that should “bruise the Serpent’s head,” or in other words, “destroy the works of the Devil,” was graciously fulfilled. In the person, the mediation, and the kingdom, of Jesus Christ, we see all the types of the ceremonial Law embodied, all the commandments of the moral Law obeyed and magnified, and all the predictions of the Prophets accomplished or accomplishing. These are, as it were, severally and together, the Star which, appearing in the heavens of love and mercy, points out to us “a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.” Among the manifold purposes of the incarnation, it was, doubtless,

one to illumine the dark and shadowy vale of death—to direct our anxious enquiry and our earnest hope to an eternal state and an immortality of being beyond the transitory scene in which we dwell and the period which terminates our existence here. This purpose was mercifully answered in the martyr Stephen. Stephen was a man “full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.” He was a devout believer in Jesus Christ, and one ardently zealous for the glory of his Lord and Master. Persons of various countries and professions disputed with him: but, none of them all were able to resist the wisdom and the spirit wherewith he spake. This roused their enmity and provoked their pride. Hence they were induced to suborn men to accuse Stephen of blasphemy. He appeared before the Council to answer the accusation of his enemies, and so full of holy love and spiritual joy was the soul of this Christian champion, that all who sat in the Council, looking steadfastly upon him, beheld his face as it had been the face of an angel. His answer to the charge brought against him we find recorded in Acts, chap. vii. It failed to convince, to soften, or to win his calumniators: and, as usual with those who “hate the light because their deeds are evil,” they resolved at once to silence and to destroy their victim: they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And they stoned Stephen calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. *And when he had said this, adds the sacred Historian, he fell asleep.*

We will now enquire

- I. What death is to the Believer;
- And II. Whence it is the Believer dies so calmly.

In enquiring,

I. *What* death is to the Believer,

We observe that it is a *sleep*; a *peaceful* sleep; a sleep *from which he will awake*; and, finally, a sleep, *into which, when once awakened, he will fall again no more.*

Death to the believer is a *sleep*. This is the simple and beautiful term by which the inspired writers designate a good man's departure. The expression conveys a sweet idea of placidity and calmness. Before Christ came, a future state of immortal being was revealed, indeed, and believed; but not so distinctly revealed and so fully believed, as it was after the birth and ministry of our Lord. Abraham saw the day of the Redeemer and looked for an heavenly country; Jacob waited for the Lord's salvation; Job knew that his Redeemer lived and that he should in his flesh see God; David anticipated a re-union with his departed son, and expected to join him in the world of spirits; but it was reserved for Jesus Christ more fully to declare the reality of that heavenly country, the nature and the means of the Lord's salvation, the certainty of the body's resurrection, and the re-union of believers with their Head and with each other in a state of perfection and glory. A believer's death is now no more than the transition of the soul from a tabernacle of clay to a "house not made with hands." The day of life declines; the shadows of its evening fall around him; wearied and exhausted nature needs repose; its strength is weakness, yea, it may be, labour and sorrow, and in the appointed moment the believer falls "asleep."—Nor is it a troublous rest: no; it is a *peaceful* sleep. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is *peace*." The stroke of death—

the pain of dissolution, is, as it were, but the kind alarm which leads a child of God to shelter himself more closely in the bosom of God's paternal love. Since the Redeemer died, death has been abolished in its penal terror. By descending, too, into the grave, he has dispelled the grave's dark horrors, and sanctified the resting-place of his dear and believing people. Thus is that saying fulfilled, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." The grave, therefore, is now no more than the bed where the mortal remains of the believer rest in peaceful hope. The souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity. They await, under the altar of a free and full acceptance, through the blood of the Lamb, their final redemption. Speedily will the Lord avenge them of their adversary, and reclaim them in both body and spirit from the state of the dead. For the Believer's death, we observe, is a sleep *from which he shall awake*. "I heard a voice from Heaven, saying, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord:" and wherefore *blessed*? Because "they rest from their labours and their works do follow them;" and because, too, "them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" when he shall descend at the sound of the seventh or last trump, to give reward unto his servants. The night of the grave will pass away; the morning of the resurrection-day will dawn, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. "Lazarus shall rise again" said "the Resurrection and the Life" to the sorrowing Martha; and at his bidding Lazarus arose. In like manner, in what age soever the believer slept in Jesus, he shall rise again. Nothing shall resist the voice which will say, "Come forth." Death and the grave must yield up their dead. "That which was sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; that which

was sown a natural, shall be raised a spiritual body." The present pains and diseases of the believer shall be felt no more. He shall come forth from his chamber, rejoicing as the sun, to pursue a cloudless, glorious, course. There shall be no more night, nor need of the sun or of the moon to lighten him; for the former things are passed away, and the Lord shall be his everlasting light, and his God his glory. Hence we are led to observe that the believer's death is a sleep *into which, when once awakened, he will fall again no more.* No, no more for ever! "Death hath no more dominion over" *Christ* our Lord: Death shall have no more dominion over *one* that believes and loves and serves him, and is "risen together with him." As surely as "He that was dead, is alive again and liveth for evermore," so surely shall the Believer rise to live for ever. In the new heavens and the new earth "there shall be no more death." The purified and ennobled powers of a glorified saint, will be too vigorous ever to need repose again. Enfeebling age; wasting disease; tears of separation; pangs of dissolution; funereal pomp; the slumbers of the grave; will never be witnessed or experienced in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. No "second death" awaits the Believer. The gift of God is *eternal life* in his dear Son; and "whoso liveth and believeth in him shall never die." Thus "the Righteous hath hope in his death:" that hope contains the germ of immortality, and beyond the sigh of expiration that germ shall bloom in rich, luxuriant, and unfailing blessedness.

Such is Death to the Believer. We come now to enquire

II. *Whence* it is he dies so calmly.

And whence is it? Simply because he is *a Believer*. By faith he becomes interested in all the benefits which result from ‘the meritorious cross and passion’ of Jesus Christ. He believes, as the hearers of Apollos did, “through grace,” and he lives by faith upon the treasured and exhaustless fulness of his divine Lord. While, therefore, viewed in Nature’s light, there is a something exceedingly terrible in Death, yet faith in a crucified and exalted Saviour, spoils the last enemy of its apparent terror, and discovers through its momentary gloom a land where perfection and bliss dwell with immortality. Hence Stephen, with a calmness and composure the most dignified and beautiful, “kneeled down” amid the stones his murderers were showering on him, and after praying for the remission of their sin, he closed his eyes and gently slept in Jesus. Now, like the martyr Stephen, the Believer *partakes of the Holy Ghost*; *sees Jesus standing on God’s right hand*; and *has a Friend to whose care he may commit his departing spirit*.

And (1.) *He partakes of the Holy Ghost*. Stephen was “*filled with the Holy Ghost* :” some measure of the same Divine and Gracious Spirit does every Believer possess. He it is who makes the Word of truth effectual for the regeneration and conversion of the heart. He it is who shews a man his native sinfulness; humbles him on account of it; wins his soul to Christ; disposes and enables him to glory in the cross; draws up his mind to high and heavenly things; leads him to see how good in every thing is the will of the Lord concerning him, and how surely in keeping God’s commandments there is a great reward. Happy, because holy, to the Believer are the ways of Piety. Swiftly obedient is he, because obedience to him is pleasant. Attractless and tasteless are the things of sense, because he walks and

lives by faith. He feels himself to be a stranger here, and waits to see “the land that is very far off”—far off and infinitely removed from sin, sorrow, pain, and death; and where his King will reign in his beauty. Then, what has the Believer to fear from Death? What is there to prevent his falling calmly to sleep? He sees “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ:” he sees that glory, too, in the humiliation of his own soul and in the renovation of his own heart: he “looks up steadfastly into Heaven,” and anticipates with humble confidence a personal possession of its promised blessedness. The Spirit which comes from above to convince the world of sin, to testify of Jesus, and to win and purify the Christian, will take back with him to the throne of God and of the Lamb every sinner that shall “believe with the heart unto righteousness.” If so, then has the Believer cause to reckon Death amongst his treasures, and to look with patient resignation and cheerful hope for “the rest which remains for the people of God.”

But (2.) *He sees Jesus standing on God's right hand*—not indeed as the martyr Stephen was favoured to behold him, *visibly*, but by *faith*. And whilst the Believer sees the Son of Man thus standing on the right hand of God, he recollects the Saviour's prayer that “where He is those who believe on Him may be also.” *Him* the Father heareth alway with infinite acceptance and delight; and whatsoever he may ask, the Father will doubtless vouchsafe. In a persuasion of this sweet truth, the Believer may smile in Death, and even desire rather to close his eyes on all present and terrestrial things. He that was “delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification,” now “ever liveth to make intercession for us.” In the dust he lay; but from the dust he rose; and now he liveth, and is alive for evermore. ‘If then,’ may the Believer say, ‘I die

with Christ, I shall also live with him: the Spirit which raised up Jesus my Lord from the dead shall also quicken my mortal body: this mortal shall put on immortality: I shall not die, but live: I have an Advocate with the Father: a blood-bought crown, a golden harp, victorious palms, and conquerors' robes, are reserved for me in the resurrection-state; why, then, should I fear to die? why fear to die even a Martyr's death, since, notwithstanding the murderous persecutions of his enemies, the believing Stephen died so calmly? Oh! what an antidote to the fear of Death should be the sure undoubted fact of Jesus being risen again and now at the right hand of God for us! "For the suffering of Death, he was, indeed, made a little lower than the angels;" but now do we see him "crowned with glory and honour:" and by and by to appear the Destroyer of death and Hades. Looking heavenward, the Believer may fearlessly close his eyes on things troublous at best and afflictive, to open them again in a world of cloudless glory and unsullied purity—a new heaven and a new earth wherein will dwell righteousness and peace. And in life's last conflict, when the sleep of death steals over him, he has

(3.) *A Friend, to whose care he may commit his departing spirit.* Either with David he may say, "*Into thy hands I commend my spirit, for thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth;*" or with Stephen, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*" Unspeakably precious is this privilege. Our earthly friends may go with us, in their kind solicitude, to the verge of death; but there the dearest ties must be severed, and a last adieu be bidden. One there is, however, that can be with us in the shadowy vale, support and cheer us through it, and while our mortal eyes are closing on all terrestrial objects, he can give to our faith such brightening views

of celestial glory as will enrapture our departing spirits and fill them with desire to wing their upward flight. As amidst the ocean's billows, the shipwrecked mariner will cling with increasing tenacity to the floating plank, so amidst the agonies of death the Believer lays a firmer and still stronger hold upon the hope of life in Christ. He sees his Lord above him in the world of blessedness: and whilst he hears the gracious words, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not afraid, for I am thy God: When thou passest through the waters, they shall not overflow thee: Thou art mine; I have called thee by thy name: Nothing shall by any means hurt you: Because I live ye shall live, and where I am, ye shall be"—how confidently may he commit the keeping of his soul to Jesus! "*Receive my spirit,*" may he cry; and very gracious will the Lord be to him at the voice of his prayer. And when he hath said this, serenely, hopefully, happily, may the spirit pass to its repose in the Redeemer's bosom. "So the Lord giveth his Beloved sleep;" and *hence* it is the Believer dies so calmly.

We have now enquired what Death is to the Believer, and whence it is he dies so calmly.

Permit me, in conclusion, my brethren, to EXHORT you

1. *To awake from the slumbers of sin:—*

How many, alas! are there "dead in trespasses and sins!" While they continue so, they cannot possibly "sleep in Jesus" or "die in the Lord." You must be enlightened with "the light of life," if ye would be peaceful and happy when the curtains of death are to be drawn around you. As, therefore, Paul said unto the careless and worldly among the Ephesians, so say I unto you—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from

the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Do not be saying in your heart, "A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep." Take care lest your sleep in the death of sin be perpetuated till you sleep in the death of nature. Take care lest when "many of them who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake," you rise—*not* to shine as the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever, but, to shame and everlasting contempt. You may suppose it time enough yet to enquire into your spiritual state, character, and situation. Because the Bridegroom tarrieth and the Lord delayeth his coming, you may therefore, you conceive, securely "slumber and sleep:" but, O, remember, the "Behold, he cometh!" may be said in a moment of which you are not aware; and when ye should be ready to go forth to meet him, what an awful discovery will it be to find you have "no oil in your vessels," and that you are all unprepared for the marriage Supper of the Lamb! The unbeliever can know no sweet repose in death. He is represented as being "*driven* away;" and whither is he driven? On the shore of what state will his undying spirit land? Which will he swell, the halleluias of the blessed or the howlings of the lost? "If he die, shall he *live* again?" Shall even the *hope* of life alleviate the pains of "the second death?" Shall the unrenewed and unforgiven man find rest or repose in hell? No: he may seek death—seek to lose all consciousness of existence, but he shall not find it. I would, then, that ye should "give no sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eyelids" until you are "alive from the dead," and reconciled to God through the death of his Son. "Awake, O sleeper, and call upon thy God," if so be thou mayest yet live the gracious life, and die the peaceful death of a Believer in Jesus.

I exhort you

2. *To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Be not satisfied with the notion that such an one as Jesus Christ once lived, or that he is the Saviour of the world, and therefore as a matter of course your Saviour too. His being a Saviour and the Saviour of others, will avail you nothing unless you *know* him to be your Saviour. In the days of your health and strength, while imagination places death far from you, you may not deeply feel your need of Jesus Christ: but, however men may live without him, it will be found dreadful to die without him. By faith in him, even a Martyr, as you have seen, could die in peace: without him, to die peacefully, in the Scripture-sense of the word, would be impossible. There must be a simple affiance in the Lord's atoning blood, an affectionate deference to his holy will, and a believing dependence on his almighty power, ere you can die the death of the Righteous. We must come to him now if we would go to him hereafter. Believe, then, on the Lord Jesus Christ. If it be hard and contrary to Nature to believe on him, cry, "Lord, help thou our unbelief: Lord, increase our faith;" and you will soon find that nothing is too hard for the Lord. You may have seen both the flower nipped in the bud—green in the morning, in the evening cut down, dried up, and withered; and you may have seen (if we may so say) the sturdier oak, that had endured the winds and storms of ages, laid prostrate in the dust. What say these things? They say that "man which is born of woman hath but a short time to live:" that though a man may reach to four-score years, yet is life, at its utmost period, but as "a vapour which appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away." And yet in this little while, how great is the work we have to

do! Ask ye, "*What* shall I do that I may work the works of God?" I answer, "This is the work of God, that ye *believe on him whom he hath sent.*" Then, be doing it. I do assure you that it is a work which even the longest life will not suffice perfectly to accomplish. The strongest faith will leave "heights and depths" of grace untravelled; and richly soever as you might be blessed, the Lord "*giveth more grace,*" and his liberality is only bounded by your capacity. I have stood beside the dying beds of several dear children of God; and it is from scenes of solemnity such as these that I come to assure you NONE BUT CHRIST can make a death-bed happy, and NONE BUT A BELIEVER IN CHRIST can die happily. Exercise, then, your faith in Jesus Christ: appropriate all the gracious offices he sustains and all the gracious characters he bears, to the relief and comfort of your souls. So shall you experience the power of God to save unto the uttermost all that come unto him in the name and mediation of his beloved Son.

I exhort you

3. And finally, *To do immediately what you purpose doing.* "*Now* is the day of salvation." Rapidly are the sands of time descending, and soon shall there be "*time no longer.*" How precious should its remaining moments be! Then

Pay no moment but in purchase of its worth,
And what it's worth, ask *death-beds*, they can tell.

'A world for an hour!' exclaimed a dying infidel:—O, then, while hours are given to you, seek to bring your good desires to good effect. I have sometimes thought, could our departed friends speak to us from the world

invisible, there is one portion of the holy Word particularly, which they would press upon our listless and careless attention : “ What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might : for there is no work or repentance in the grave whither ye are hastening.” Mark also that impressive question asked by the Apostle Paul in Heb. ii. 1—4.— Still in his Word is God speaking to us from Heaven : “ Hear, and your souls shall live.” The signs, too, of our times are affectingly significant. All things are betokening a moral crisis in the affairs of earth. What “ desolations ” may be wrought therein, who can tell ? Let us heed the exhortation to “ watch and pray.” And where the great work of personal and practical piety hitherto remains all neglected, O be persuaded to awake, to arise, and to call upon “ that worthy Name.” “ It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s fierce anger,” and should he even unexpectedly require your soul of you, your departure would be

—— a peaceful sleep ;

A gentle wafting to immortal rest.

And when the rest of the separate state is past, you will come forth clad in the garment of incorruptibility—your death swallowed up in glorious victory—and now looking heavenward by *sight* and not by faith, you will see Him whom you have loved and honoured, ready to receive you to himself—to wipe every tear of sorrow from your eyes, and to lead you with Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and the whole Church of the Redeemed, to fountains of unmingled blessedness and joys that shall know no end. Be this your happy lot for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

YOUTHFUL PIETY: DESCRIBED AND INCULCATED.

ECCLESIASTES xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.

WHILE Piety is amiable and lovely in all, it is peculiarly so in young people. It imparts an excellence and a worth to character, which education of the most varied and costly kind cannot afford without it. It is piety, rather than birth, or wealth, or learning, that gives the most pleasing refinement to both the mind and manner of our youth. It is, certainly, conducive to their highest and noblest interests; for why else should its adoption come recommended to us so urgently both by Scriptural precept and example? We may gather, I conceive, from the holy Word, that though “His tender mercies are over all his works,” yet is the Lord’s love towards the young a very gracious and peculiar love. In Isaiah xl. 11, he is compared to a Shepherd, who, whilst he leadeth his sheep—*leadeth the elders of his people, carrieth his lambs—carrieth the little ones of his flock* in his bosom, and foldeth *them* in his arms. When

too, “the High and Lofty One” humbled himself, took upon him our nature, and became “the Man Christ Jesus,” we find him regarding children with singular complacency and delight, reproving those who would have kept them from him, and saying, “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.” Many exhortations and encouragements to youthful piety are found in the Bible: our text forms one of a beautiful and engaging description; every word of which is remarkably emphatic: “*Remember—remember now—remember now thy Creator—remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.*”

Favour me, then, with your attention while I endeavour

- I. To say wherein Youthful Piety consists:
- II. To obviate some Objections to it:
- III. To state some Reasons for it:
- And IV. To recommend it earnestly to the Young among you.

As we discuss these several heads, the subject of early Piety will come fully, and, I trust, profitably under our consideration. I will endeavour

I. *To say wherein YOUTHFUL PIETY consists:—*

It consists, you will find, in a ready, filial, and grateful remembrance of God—a remembrance which induces acquiescence in the Divine will and subjection to it. Do you ask, What the will of the Lord is in any definite particulars?—“This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,”

and “this also is the will of God, even our sanctification.” The grace of *faith* which produces the fruit of *holiness*, constitutes real piety. God himself describes the piety of youth in a verse well known to some of you—“Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the Guide of my youth?” “*My Father!*” cried through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of adoption, is—Youthful Piety.

But it will more easily appear wherein Youthful Piety consists if we instance the submission and obedience of a child in the family of a Christian parent. A truly Christian parent will, of course, have the well-being of his children very nearly at heart. In all his conduct towards them; in all his treatment of them; in all he requires from them, he will design simply their moral and spiritual improvement. His children may not always be told the *reasons* of their father's conduct towards them, or be altogether satisfied as to its wisdom and propriety; but this, if they be meek, yielding, and submissive, will not much concern them, nor will it be otherwise than pleasant and delightful to honour and obey a father whom they revere and love. Now, their father may know them to be in a scene of peril and danger: calling to him one of his youthful charge, we will suppose him to say, ‘My child, you live in a wicked and an ensnaring world; its people are too generally vain and foolish; its ways are frivolous and false; its friendships are shadowy and delusive; the Devil and all his works you have promised to renounce; I must require you, therefore, not to affect the world, not to court its popularity, or to desire its pleasures.’ What duteous child would question the father's judgment or refuse to acquiesce in the father's will?

The father, too, may see the mind of a child set with

intense delight upon some unimportant trifle. He watches for a favourable moment, and says, 'Come here, my child; you seem greatly pleased with that trifle: now listen to me; go and throw it into the fire, and I will give you something really valuable.' The countenance of the child is clouded. It has at present nothing in the stead of what it so much loves and wishes to retain. The parent, however, must be obeyed: he is known to be too kind to require any thing for his children's hurt: with, perhaps, a sorrowing heart and a tearful eye, the trifle is thrown away; the father's promise is believed and his command obeyed: when it pleases him, he fulfils his word; the child becomes fully satisfied with the parental kindness thus exhibited, and enjoys with mingled feelings of surprise and pleasure, the richer good it has acquired.

A child may, moreover, be sick, and, to human view, declining for death. A tender parent will be all-anxious to ease and save him: he prepares a remedy: it may be bitter and nauseous to the taste: there may be, at first, great unwillingness on the part of the afflicted little one to receive it. 'My child,' we will suppose the father to say, 'you are very ill; you must die without relief: I have procured a medicine which, if you will take it, may do you good: do, I entreat you, comply.' Possibly, with hesitation and reluctance, it is taken: it happily avails: pain is alleviated; ease is afforded; health is restored, and the life is preserved. What now will be the feelings of such a child towards its parent? Will the father's love be forgotten? Surely not; but rather a deeper and more grateful remembrance of the father and the father's kindness will be felt within the bosom of the child. Or should, unhappily, the child be forgetful of its parent and his kindness—abuse authority, or act contrary to known commands, the father's

“loving correction” shall humble it, bring its fault to remembrance, and induce a purer and more earnest desire to “walk in all pleasing” than was ever felt before.

Now, let the *Father* we have imagined be “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and the *child* we have supposed be the child of God’s gracious adoption, and then the *conduct* we have described will be—the Piety of early youth.

God says, “Come out from the wicked and be separated: touch not the unclean thing: love not the world, neither the things of the world: have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them: follow not the multitude to do evil: a companion of fools shall be destroyed: the wicked shall be turned into hell: the Sodom of this world’s iniquity shall be burned up: Come, therefore, out of her, my Children: I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” This is the heavenly Parent’s call to his dear family: ‘they through grace obey the calling,’ and so become “a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” “children that will not lie,” “a spiritual seed,” happy members of the household of faith. God sees, also, that his children’s affections too easily centre in things below: He bids them, therefore, to deny themselves, to forsake, in willingness to do so, even all that they have, and to follow Him. He promises, however, to repay them a hundred-fold what thing soever they give up, or deny themselves for his sake. They love his will: they believe his word: though, therefore, any thing of a worldly, pleasurable, or sinful kind, be dear to them as “a right hand,” they cut it off and cast it away. And what do they find in its stead? When God fulfils “the good pleasure of his goodness” towards them, his children find themselves possessed of more “durable

riches" and sublimer joys than any earthly good, or the utmost possible indulgence of the natural senses could afford to them.

Again; the Eternal Father finds mankind in a state of abject wretchedness and ruin—no health in us, and our souls "sick unto death." He comes, and with bowels of a most beseeching tenderness yearning towards us, he says, "Why will ye die? My wisdom hath devised a remedy that will at once expiate your guilt and satisfy my justice: I have found a Ransom: See your Atonement in the blood-shedding of my Son: Honour him with the assurance of your hope and the confidence of your faith: Forego all self-dependence, and glory only in your Lord, and you shall prove my power to save you unto the uttermost." At first, it may be, with trembling hesitation the word of this salvation is received; subsequently, it is embraced with more cordial and grateful readiness, and presently the before sickening, dying soul becomes renovated, exalted, purified, in all her powers and faculties. The rebel becomes a child; and will the child forget the grace that makes him such? Will there be no holy remembrance of this Father of mercies?—No delight in his presence?—No love to his Word—his day—his ways and people? Assuredly there will: for what child that reveres his Father, will not affect his Father's presence, society, and conversation? Should a child of God, however, be "overtaken in a fault," and thereby "grieve the Holy Spirit of God," the chastisement of love shall humble him; and when humbled, the Lord will restore comforts unto him, and by the grace of God he shall rise again, amend his life, and proceed with greater circumspection than he walked before.

This, then, Beloved, we call Youthful Piety. It consists, you see, in a humble, affectionate, and deferen-

tial remembrance of our Creator. And can there possibly exist *objections* to it? Why, it would be heaven on earth if all mankind were thus piously disposed. Objections, however, to any thing cannot make that thing unworthy our attention and regard: nay, rather, they sometimes, when examined, tend to enhance its value. Having, therefore, shewn wherein Youthful Piety consists, I proceed

II. *To obviate some OBJECTIONS to it:*

(1.) *It is time enough yet, say some, for Youth to think seriously and to be pious.* This objection proceeds on the supposition that Youth have yet many days and years to come: but how know we what a day or even an hour may bring forth? Yesterday is passed and cannot be recalled: to-morrow we cannot insure: the present moment only is our's, and this, if it be lost, will be lost for ever. Delay, therefore, is hazardous in the extreme. It is "with fear and trembling" we are enjoined to "work out our salvation:" how dreadful, then, must be indifference and unconcern about it! Besides, who but God, our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, should have the prime and vigour of our lives? Shall we give the best and the earliest of our days to ourselves, to our temporal interests or worldly pleasures, and the mere fragments of our time, with their commonly attendant weakness, weariness, and worthlessness, to our Creator? Will ye call this an acceptable offering to the Lord? Is not this, rather, to offer the maimed and the blind and the halt upon his altar? The youngest of us all is not too young to die; the majority of those born into the world, it is believed die before they are seven years old; can any then be too young to remember now his Creator? "I love them, says the

Wisdom of God, who love me ; and they that seek me *early* shall find me."

(2.) *Youth is the time of enjoyment*, say others : *Young People should enjoy themselves*. True : and is there nothing to enjoy in the favour and friendship of our Creator ?—Nothing to enjoy in freedom from the guilt and from the power of sin ?—Nothing to enjoy in a conscious redemption from a hell of everlasting woe, and a hope full of immortal blessedness ?—Nothing to enjoy in being good and doing good ? And is there any time comparable to youth for the enjoyment of these things ?—Besides, what, in the place of the duties and privileges of religion, are the objects which young people are usually allowed to enjoy ? Why, they may give the reins to passion, seek pleasure wherever they can find it, spend their days and nights in idle dissipation, not concern themselves at all about serious godliness, but forget their Creator, contemn his authority, and cast his law behind them : and all this we are told is rational enjoyment, and best befitting the days of early life. How surely does "*the natural man discern NOT the things of the Spirit !*" What, I ask, is there in the gratifications of sense to satisfy the desires of an immortal being ? Will any thing merely sensual please the soul in its hereafter recollections ? Can any thing but piety afford either youth or age *real* satisfaction and *enduring* pleasure ? No : without this, "vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, ALL is vanity."

(3.) *Religion is very well and suitable for old age and infirmity*, is an objection to Youthful Piety nearly allied to the foregoing. So it is : but is it, therefore, unsuitable to health and youth ? The young are alike liable to disease and sickness with the aged. Take away religion, and what would you substitute for it ? Can any thing but "the consolation that is in Christ"

soothe a distressed and wearied mind, cheer the gloom of a sick or dying chamber, and smooth the descent to the grave? The experience of ages is accumulated in proof of the power of the Gospel to comfort and sustain the mind amidst the pains, the weaknesses, and all the various evils that afflict mortality. Philosophers may laugh and infidels may scoff at Piety and its sacred influences; but their laughter and their scorn only prove them to be foolish and irreligious men. It will be found that nothing but the fear and love of our Creator will carry us honourably and safely through the scenes of active life, save us from the sins and dangers which at all times surround us, and make our old age cheerful and respectable.

(4.) *We can repent and be religious some future time*, will young people themselves sometimes say, when exhorted to remember *now* their Creator. But to repent when we will is not in our power. Repentance is the gift of Jesus Christ, and he may righteously withhold to-morrow what we ungratefully refuse to-day. “Now” are you, ye young, required to remember your Creator. He does not say, Forget me ten, twenty, or thirty years, and then remember me. No, he asks your remembrance of him immediately. Your meaning to be religious hereafter, admits the propriety of your being so now; your not being so at present is manifestly wrong; for “to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” “Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

(5.) *Piety induces gloom and melancholy*, it is often further urged. But how is it, let me ask, that people so very generally resort to religious exercises in sickness and at the approach of death? Would they do so if

there were nothing but melancholy and gloom in religion? Did this fact never strike you? Does it not argue that there must be something in piety not to be found in any thing beside? And can we suppose *that something* an occasion of sadness and distress?—Besides, who are they that say piety induces depression and gloom of spirit? Not the *pious*, but such as never felt the power of godliness or experienced the joy of faith. Are they, then, to be believed who tell us of what they cannot possibly be judges? Listen rather to the children of God, and they will assure you from sweet experience that “Wisdom is the principal thing,” and that “*her* ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.” There was “*great joy*” in Samaria as soon as the Gospel of Jesus Christ was heard, received, believed, and loved, there. Some measure of the same joy will invariably accompany a sincere “belief of the Truth.” Was the society or the converse of a kind and benevolent parent ever known to make a child unhappy?—Moreover; *if* piety in its present imperfect exercises tend to make us melancholy, how shall we endure its purer and sublimer engagements in a future world, and *that* uninterruptedly for ever? *If* the remembrance of our Creator sadden and deject our spirits here, O how abjectly wretched will they be before the throne of God and of the Lamb!

(6.) *Piety interferes with genteel and polite demeanour*, it has, too, been said. This objection betrays in those who advance it, great ignorance of Scripture and of Scriptural character. No: the Gospel which we preach inculcates morals the most correct and chaste, tempers the most gracious, manner the most affable, behaviour the most courteous. According to St. James’s testimony, in chap. i. 9, 10, Piety gives to gentility its finest polish, and to poverty its noblest ornament. In

the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, lowliness of mind is true nobility, and simplicity of deportment true politeness. If the eternal Father condescend to adopt into his family a child, poor and illiterate though he be, does it become us to slight and contemn him on account of his poverty and ignorance? Ought we not rather to acknowledge in such an one—a brother? One that shares with us the riches of the same unmerited favour, and that shall inherit, equally with the greatest born, the most affluent and the most learned, the same kingdom and throne and crown of glory? However high or wise our young people may be, a remembrance of their Creator will prove to them the richest heritage and the sublimest science. “*The fear of the Lord, THAT is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*”

But (7.) *It will incur reproach, and possibly it may injure a young man's reputation; and consequently also may retard his advancement in life to be pious too soon,* is the final objection to early Piety we shall choose to notice. O how human nature must be fallen, for a remembrance of our Creator—a deference to the will and love to the commandments of our heavenly Father, to incur reproach! How sordid must be the views of a parent who seeks FIRST for his children *any* object below “the kingdom of God and his righteousness!” And how must “the honour which cometh of man” be desired and valued above “the honour which cometh of God only” where there exists the fear of disrepute on account of religion! But, be it so: the carnal mind cannot be subject to the Law of God: how then can it respect or esteem the individuals who keep it? Is man to be feared rather than God? If any who love the Lord are subjected to peculiarity, whose fault is it? Is it not their's who “forget God” and make themselves

and the aggrandizement of their own interests their great and exclusive aim?—If we differ in taste, in sentiment, in feeling, in desire, and hope, from the worldling, it should be matter of devout thanksgiving, and one pleasing proof to our minds that we are “born of God,” and really become his children. “If,” says the once despised and rejected Saviour, “ye were of the world, the world would love you: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” Let it hate you, O youthful Christian; it hated your Lord before it hated you: and if you suffer with him—whether in the esteem or by the conduct of men, you shall also reign with him, and acquire that honour and advancement in the day of his appearing which the words—“Come, ye blessed children of my Father,” so abundantly imply.

Having now endeavoured to obviate some objections to Youthful Piety, I come

III. *To state some REASONS for it:*

There are many and powerful Reasons for serious religion in early life: mark the following:

(1.) *It is reasonable in itself.* When the Holy Spirit by the Apostle Paul, beseeches us by the mercies of God to present ourselves, as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto him, he calls our so doing a “reasonable service.” And surely it can be none other than reasonable that a *creature* should remember his Creator; a *redeemed* creature his Redeemer; and an *immortal* creature that immortality which awaits him. We execrate ingratitude one towards another: is there nothing offensive in an ungrateful forgetfulness of our Maker? Soon, then, as reason dawns, should it be exercised in acquiring

the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. If Piety be ever a reasonable thing, it cannot be unreasonable in Youth.

(2.) *God requires it.* It is God who says, “Remember now thy Creator in the *days of thy Youth*. My son, says he again, give Me thy heart : Let me be enthroned in your affections and desires : Thou shalt have no other gods but me : I will not give my glory to another : It is good for a man to bear the yoke *in his youth* ; take, therefore, my yoke upon you.” Now, “will a man rob God ?” Yet, “*ye* have robbed me,” may God justly say to those of our Youth who forget him and refuse to him the homage of their hearts. They rob him of the best, because they withhold from him the earliest and the choicest, of their time and strength. God’s kindness is perfectly disinterested : when he requires our remembrance of him, it is for our own good. “Great peace,” says the holy Psalmist, “have they that keep thy law ; and nothing shall offend them.” When, therefore, the Father of our spirits says, *Remember ME*, he says in effect, Take the surest method of being peaceful and happy. In this way, then, O young man, mayest thou “rejoice, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy Youth.”

(3.) *The mind is more susceptible of impression when young.* There is in early youth a susceptibility of feeling, very rarely to be found in grown or elderly people. It is well known to those who are at all conversant with aged persons, how difficult, in general, it is to make them understand even the simplest statements. Whereas, the truths of Revelation plainly and affectionately declared, will often produce impressions of a most pleasing kind in earlier life and on more youthful minds. A character will thus be formed of sterling and substantial worth. Where a filial fear of God becomes the

grand and ruling principle of action, the reply of the young man Joseph will be present in the hour of temptation and trial—"How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Nature, indeed, and sense, will still be opposed to truth and holiness: but the corruption of Nature will yield to the prevalency of grace; and the "babe" will eventually ripen into "manhood," and become "a father in Christ."

(4.) *Piety in Youth gives a proper bias to the affections.* We do not advocate the system from which the affections are excluded. Jesus Christ most certainly meant them to be exercised in the Religion of his followers: why else does he require us to "set our *affections* on things above?" and why else does St. Peter speak of love to an unseen Saviour, and joy in him, through faith, unspeakable and full of glory?^a Now, we all know how easy it is to set our affections on things below; and where they have been long centred in "things that are seen and temporal," how hard do we find it to fix them on "things that are not seen and eternal!" With youth, therefore, it must be less arduous to cultivate a religious taste, and to maintain a heavenly conversation. "The desire of our soul is to thy Name and to the remembrance of thee," says Isaiah.^b Sure we are when the affections are thus fixed on God in Christ, nothing will be valued or desired but what is really good: and were all things wanting save *one*, that one would lead even a little child to say—"The LORD is my portion; I shall not want:" "I love my God and am beloved by him: and in him I find my rest, my heaven, my all."

(5.) *The world will be viewed in a true light.* The real character of the world's ensnaring and deceptive vanities cannot be seen but by the light of Truth.

^a 1 Epis. i. 8.

^b Chap. xxvi. 8.

Where the Truth is believed and felt, there will cease to be a relish for mere transitory pursuits and pleasures. They will weary and disgust a soul affectionately mindful of its Creator, and really alive to the joys of faith. Those who “remember God in his ways,” will deem this no hard saying. Now, the world is, allowedly, a great enemy to young persons. They are not yet acquainted with its deceptiveness. There is in its riches, its friendships, and its honours, a seeming good—a something to be desired to make one happy: but, only let our Creator be remembered, only let the realities of an *eternal* state be perceived, only let “the joy and peace of believing” be experienced, and the good which *this* world could give us becomes trivial and unimportant in comparison. True, by some parents this would be thought a calamity did it happen to their child or children; but they would think so only because they themselves were the servants of Mammon, and “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” To what must we ascribe that zest for carnal mirth—that fondness for dress—that aspiring to be something when we are nothing—that ambition to imitate superiors—that shame of poverty and of poor relations—that discontent with the station of life wherein a just and gracious God has placed us, but to *a want of Piety*? Can we then, be pious too soon? Can we too soon renounce the world in our desires and heart? Can we too soon be mindful of our Creator?

(6.) *Piety in youth lays a foundation for placidity and calmness in age.* The lapse of years deepens and matures religious principle. The youthful Christian grows in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour. Faith increases; hope strengthens; love abounds. Does he pray, “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; and hitherto have I declared thy

wondrous works : Now also when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not :"^a The answer of God says unto him, " Even to your old age I am he ; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you : I have made, and I will bear ; even I will carry and will deliver you."^b What gracious promises are these ! how rich ! how full ! Amidst the infirmities of age ; in the absence of many that were the companions of our early days, and the friends of our maturer life, " I am he," saith the Lord ; your unchanging and ever-faithful God : " I will carry you ; I will bear you ; I will deliver you." To insure this " fatherly goodness" in old age, who would not remember now his Creator in the days of his Youth ? Look at a *good* old man ; how venerable and interesting is the object ! The silvered brow ; the placid manner ; the upraised eye ; the cheered and illuminated countenance ; the resigned soul, and the earnest hope, all bespeak him ripening for immortality. " All the days of my appointed time, says he, will I wait, till my change come : " and when that change arrives how consistently may he add, " I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord !" " *Other* foundation save Jesus Christ" can no man, indeed, lay ; but to have built on him " the gold, the silver, and the precious stones" of a holy, religious, and useful life, will secure in that life's declining days, and beyond the period of our earthly being, a free and a rich reward.

(7.) *Jesus Christ, our God and Saviour, will be more abundantly honoured by the devotion of our first years unto his service.* It is a poor reward for all his mercies towards us, and all his sorrows on our account, to give the Lord the last moments of a useless life. Did he create us, and when we were fallen, redeem us, and are

^a Psalm lxxi. 17, 18.

^b Isaiah xlv. 4.

we under no obligation to remember him? Should not our children cry, “Hosanna to the Son of David?” Is it possible to love a Redeemer prematurely, or to serve him too gratefully? Alas! how sadly in general, is he forgotten! how heartlessly worshipped! how scarcely esteemed! Whereas, let but our Youth remember, worship, and obey him, and how much would be done for the good of his chosen, the preparation of his way, the furtherance of his kingdom, and the glory of his name! There is a vigour of thought, a warmth of feeling, a flow of benevolence, in early life, which when devoted to the service of the Lord, makes that service energetic and delightful. Most kindly disposed is the Lord Jesus Christ towards the young; and although he is in glory now, he does not despise the feeblest effort to please and honour him. Josiah in the eighth year of his age, “thought upon the Lord:” Timothy “from a child” knew the Holy Scriptures: and for the encouragement of others to remember him, the Lord has said by Samuel,—“Them that honour me, I will honour: whilst those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.”

Then because Youthful Piety is reasonable in itself;—because it is required by God;—because the mind when young is more susceptible of impression;—because piety in youth gives a proper bias to the affections;—because the world will be viewed in a true light;—because piety lays in youth a foundation for placidity and calmness in age; and because, finally, the Saviour will be more abundantly glorified by the devotion of our childhood to his service, should Piety particularly be cultivated in early life.

And having stated these Reasons for it, permit me now

IV. and lastly, *To recommend it earnestly to the Young among you.*

To every individual Young Person amongst you, I would say, “Remember now *thy* Creator, in the days of *thy* youth.” Be it your solemn and determined purpose to do so. If, unhappily, you have suffered childhood and youth to pass away in forgetfulness of God, O! forget him now no longer. Remember him in your maturer years, and let not age come upon you, and find you still unmindful of him. You are exhorted to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, “*while the evil days come not and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*” Days of evil may await you; days of weariness and painfulness; days of sorrow and distress; and ere your life in the body closes, even years may be added to it in which nothing of a worldly kind can be enjoyed: How well then would it be for you to have a Friend, a Saviour, a Comforter, in God! How sweet to feel the eternal Spirit’s consolations! How cheering amid the gloom of these days or years of evil to be assured that “the Sun of Righteousness” was rising, and that though hidden now behind some passing clouds, he would appear anon with healing in his beams! Then, remember *now* your Creator. Cherish a filial fear of your great Father. True; you may both hear and adduce objections to your so doing: but, what are they? Will they bear the test of Scripture? Can they invalidate your obligations to remember your Creator? Do they even satisfy yourselves? Does not conscience whisper that you ought to remember God? Is there not a latent purpose within you sooner or later to think of him?—Then, why not now? You have before you several Reasons stated for piety in youth: Have these no weight with you? Let them, I pray you, dwell upon your mind. Consider to whom you are indebted for your being: Who brought you through your infant dan-

gers : Who now asks your remembrance of him, and why he says, *Remember Me*. Add to the rich mercies of your creation and preservation, the richer mercies of your redemption. Was your Creator and Preserver obligated to become your Redeemer ? Could he not “by *any* means clear the guilty,” other than by becoming himself “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,” living a life of privation and poverty, and dying an accursed death ? and shall your hearts remain unmoved towards him ? Shall your youthful ardour not kindle in the service of this Saviour-God ?—What though elder persons, and possibly your parents themselves, may seem to have forgotten their Creator in the days of their youth, and to be forgetful of him still ; they are no example for you. God says, Do not *ye* forget me : let me be remembered in *your* youth. And what though others should discourage or disallow religion in you, and should urge one or all of the objections to Youthful Piety we have just noticed ? You are to obey God rather than man : even a parent’s command is not to be regarded when it comes in competition with the word and will of God. It is because so many of our elders are too manifestly unmindful of their God, that therefore we wish you, ye young, especially, to remember him. Let me observe, too, the piety of a child has not unfrequently been a means of spiritual and eternal benefit to a parent or an older member of a family. I have known an instance where the parents would most willingly have crushed the beginning of piety in a child : but where that child has been privileged to see a gracious change in both his parents, and been favoured to hear them acknowledge, ‘There is no time like *youth* to serve the Lord.’ “Whoso is wise and will consider these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.” It is not true that

piety spoils the native cheerfulness and buoyancy of the youthful mind. The sorrows of penitence may indeed becloud the brow and solemnize the manner for a season, but when brought unto Jesus, though there may be the weakness and helplessness of him of whom we read in Matt. ix. 2, yet will the words, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee," "put joy and gladness into his heart," and he will "go on his way rejoicing;" rejoicing—not perhaps as once he did, in the frivolities of the world, but—in the pardoning mercy and redeeming love of his Creator. And can any joy be compared unto this joy? Is not this 'that sunshine of the breast' without which a gloomy desolation reigns through all our powers? Study then to make it your own by a grateful remembrance of your Creator now in the days of your youth. And should any through pride, or ignorance, or prejudice, or all together, oppose, vilify, mock, and condemn your remembrance of him, do not "strive" with them, but "be gentle unto all men; apt to teach" as opportunity shall be afforded; "in meekness instructing those that oppose" both their own and your best interests; "if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." It is "with meekness and fear" we must "be ready to give to every one that asketh us, a reason of the hope that is in us." Youth should oftener wait to be asked "a reason" than to force one upon others. Firmness of principle should be tempered with modesty of deportment, and reservedness of speech.—Another ground also there is whereon I would earnestly recommend piety to your adoption and practice: A time is coming with all when "man goeth to his long home and the mourners go about the streets"—when "the silver cord of life is loosened"—when "the dust returns unto dust again, and the spirit to Him who gave it:" In that time

would you not wish that God should remember *you*? and “remember you with the favour he beareth towards his people?” Assuredly you would: but can you reasonably expect him to do so while you remain forgetful of him? Think how agonized and tormented will be the minds of those who shall come to the door of Mercy, saying, “Lord, Lord, open to us,” and to whom the Lord will answer, “Depart from me, I know you not!” Then, knock betimes. Fulfil your baptismal engagements: “pay that ye have vowed.” Give your young hearts up to God. Use with earnest diligence the Means of grace wherewith he so kindly favours you. Ask ye what these Means are? I answer, chiefly these, Meditation;^a Prayer;^b Reading the Word of your Creator;^c Attending his public Ordinances;^d and spiritual Conversation with any persons older and more experienced than yourselves.^e “This do and ye shall live”—live, by “the supply of the Spirit of Christ,” a life of joy and usefulness and peace in this world, and in the world to come a life of near and everlasting communion with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. If there be in you a wish to be godly, and yet a principle of opposition struggling against it, O cry unto the Lord for help: he reveals himself unto you as “one mighty to save;” and while he bids you to remember him, he will give you increasing grace to trust in his remembrance of you. “Ask and ye shall have.” Listen not for a moment to the reasonings of the carnal mind, the insinuations of the Enemy, or the ill-timed and mis-judging advices of ungodly people. Resolve with Joshua that, come what will, you “*will* serve the Lord.” “Only be strong and of a good courage:”

^a Gen. xxiv. 63. Ps. xxxix. 3. ^b Ps. xl. 1, 3. Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

^c Jer. xxiii. 29. John v. 39. Heb. iv. 12.

^d Acts x. 33, 34. Heb. x. 25.

^e Mal. iii. 16, 18.

only *decide* Whom you will obey, and Who shall have the earliest and the warmest affections of your heart, and you will presently feel triumphantly superior to every thing that would oppose your Youthful Piety. Reproach for Christ's sake would not move you. Love to your Lord would bear, hope, believe, and endure, all things. You would feel as those felt who once departed from the presence of an iniquitous council, "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for a Saviour's sake," and then will your experience confirm the saying, "*BLESSED is the man that feareth the Lord, and that delighteth greatly in his commandments ;*" nor will you to all eternity regret remembering your Creator now in the days of your youth.

'Defend, O Lord, these thy servants, with thy heavenly grace, that they may continue there for ever; and daily increase in thy holy Spirit more and more, until they come unto thine everlasting kingdom. Amen.'

SERMON XVII.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS: ITS ADVANTAGES.

1 THESSALONIANS V. 11.

Wherefore, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

‘THE Communion of Saints’ forms an article of the Christian faith. We profess as firm a belief therein as we do in the existence of God the Father Almighty; the mission, work, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; or the personality and influence of the Holy Spirit. But, the *profession* of a truth and the *experience* of it, are widely different things. It would be well if all who *say* they believe in the Communion of Saints, *felt* what they said. It is much to be feared that when many are repeating the Apostle’s Creed, God sees a most inconsiderate expression upon their lips—sees that they neither know nor care to know the import of the words they utter. Justly might he say, with reference to such characters, as he did with reference to Israel, “I have heard the voice of the words of this people,

which they have spoken : they have *well said* all that they have spoken : O that there were such an *heart* in them !”^a Of you, Beloved, we hope better things, and trust that “with your hands” and voice, you “lift up your *heart* to God in the heavens.”^b To you then we would say in the language of Paul to the Thessalonian converts, “Wherefore, comfort yourselves together and edify one another, even as also ye do.” In making a few remarks on these words, we shall do so under the two following heads :—

- I. The Communion of Saints :
- II. The Advantages of it.

And I. The *Communion of Saints*.

Ere we notice their *Communion*, it may be well to say whom we mean by *Saints*. By *Saints*, then, we understand those who have been convinced of sin ; shewn their lost and ruined state by nature ; drawn to Jesus Christ ; and are now living under the sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost. These are the *Saints*. Or, if you would know them by another description of character—they are individuals whom the servants of Mammon and the lovers of pleasure usually call so in *derision*. If you see any persons truly desirous of salvation ; using with earnest diligence the means of grace ; professing subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ ; studious in all things to serve and honour him ; going about, as their gracious Lord before them did, doing good ; loving their enemies and praying for those who despitefully use them, or persecute them—you may be sure there is something in them which so peculiarly distinguishes

^a Deut. v. 28, 29.

^b Lam. iii. 41.

them, something which worldly and ungodly people cannot define, and therefore deride. But who that is blessed with spiritual discernment, does not see that such persons are, as David would call them, “the Excellent of the Earth,” or as Daniel says, “the Saints of the Most High?” “We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.” Can there be any thing in a resemblance to infinite excellence calculated to provoke enmity or to excite a sneer? ‘Doth not our Baptism represent unto us our profession, which is, to follow Christ and *to be made like unto him*?’ Does it, then, become any member of the Church to condemn the true followers of Jesus Christ? While, however, “the carnal mind is enmity against God,” we must not wonder at its enmity against *godliness* in his *children*.—There is also another mark whereby the Saints may be known:—They will not be forward to arrogate the title to themselves. They are “called *to be* Saints,” and would fain *be*, as “the called of God,” “holy in all manner of conversation:” but so sensible are they of their sinfulness; so convinced of the imperfection attaching even to their holiest things, that they dare not think themselves to have attained, either that they are already perfect, but fear, and sometimes greatly so, that they have little or no claim to the honourable appellation and implied felicity of a—Saint. “The Lord, however, knoweth them that are his,” and in them he will eventually “fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.”

Such, then, are the Saints: and now what is their *Communion*?—It is a union of heart with Christ and with one another: a secret and invisible friendship that binds them all together in and with their common Lord.

Agreeably to the prayer of their divine Master, they wish to be *one* in him. They are children of one Father ; lovers of one Saviour ; partakers of one Spirit ; heirs of one kingdom, and when that kingdom comes, they will together sing one song, and their one unwearied and everlasting song will be—"Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood ; and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father—to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." The Communion of the Saints is confined to no Church, to no age, to no people, to no place. It resembles that eternity whose centre is everywhere, and whose circumference is no where. It is the breath which animates that ' Congregation of Faithful Men amongst whom the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's ordinance,' live when and where soever they may.—If the grace of our adorable Lord visit, renew, and sanctify some poor Indian or African, who might be a thousand or five thousand miles off ; and the same grace visit, renew, and sanctify any poor sinner amongst ourselves : let those two gracious persons meet, and there would be a community of feeling and of interests between them. They would be found to affect the same things, to avoid the same things, to feel the same things, to anticipate the same things. They would seem to have but one heart, and between them there would be a union—if not of name or Church or People, at least—of Spirit. They would "love as brethren," and as brethren would they "dwell together in unity." The same lowliness of mind ; the same sense of personal unworthiness ; the same love of the same Saviour ; the same deadness to the world ; the same disposition and desire to be holy in heart and deed ; the same bias of soul towards that new heaven and new earth wherein

dwelleth righteousness, will invariably characterize with more or less distinctness, every one whom the Holy Ghost inspires, enlightens, and renews.

The intercourse also of the Saints is very gracious and familiar. Like the Disciples on their way to Emmaus, they have "certain communications one with another," as they walk their Heaven-ward way, whilst Jesus himself not unfrequently draws nigh and walks in spirit with them—expounds to them the things which Moses and the Prophets wrote concerning him, and shews them how the Messiah *ought* to have suffered, and through suffering to enter into his glory. Feelings, desires, hopes, joys, and sorrows, with which the people of the world are totally unacquainted, form the subjects of their conversation. In vain would the Saints go to those who know not the grace of God in truth—whose minds had never been drawn up to high and heavenly things, to tell what they felt or wished or loved or enjoyed. Mere nominal christians *could* not commune with them : they knew nothing of—what, perhaps, with no little self-complacency they profess to believe—'the Communion of Saints.' They would marvel to hear such things. It would seem to them like a fabulous tale, or the utterance of an unknown tongue ; and they would say, probably, somewhat as Festus said to Paul, "Much Religion doth make thee mad." Whereas, Saints *with* Saints can interchange their minds ; feel a delightful freedom of thought and speech in so doing ; and while thus "communing one with another," they find the hours too short in which to tell of the great things that the Lord hath done for their souls. *Themselves*—their joys and griefs, their failures and triumphs, their fears and hopes : Their *Lord*—his condescension, goodness, love, and truth : His *Kingdom* and *Doctrine*—how most effectually they may further the one and

adorn the other: Their *Heritage*—in its future and all-glorious perfection,—by turns engage the attention and occupy the communications of the Saints. True, indeed, circumstances may sometimes occur that will interrupt for a passing moment their usually harmonious agreement. Though they are Saints and walk as friends taking sweet counsel, yet perfection does not mark their earthly existence. While “GOING ON *unto perfection*,” the depravity of Nature doth remain even in them that are regenerate, and although we may be baptized and born again in Christ, yet do we offend in many things, and fail of that perfect and uninterrupted communion which the Saints will enjoy in an after state. Their “communing, however, will be of peace,” and they will desire to ‘hold the Faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.’ Envy and strife will cease. All will agree to “hold the Head,” and all will “rejoice in hope” of an everlasting union with their common Lord, and with each other, in his approaching kingdom. No discordant notes will flow from the harps of the redeemed in glory—no cloud of ignorance shall darken their intellectual vision, no opposing principle in nature shall retard their progress towards perfection in the resurrection-state. All will “apprehend that for which they are apprehended of God in Christ Jesus,” and all will be “holy and without blame before Him in love.”

Such, then, Beloved, is the Communion of Saints. We come to notice

II. *The Advantages of it.*

The Advantages of it are numerous and valuable. We shall confine our attention to those mentioned in our text: These are *comfort* and *edification*: “Where-

fore *comfort* yourselves together, and *edify* one another, even as also ye do."

And, *first*, There is *comfort* in the Communion of Saints.

The holy and believing followers of Christ are, by no means, exempt from trials and sufferings here. Indeed *their* trials and sufferings are often more painful and heavier than those of others. *They* have a spiritual warfare to maintain; self to deny; a cross to bear; a heart, naturally averse to good, to govern; a subtle and powerful enemy to contend with; a world alluring in its pretences, and deceptive in its arts, to overcome: and, notwithstanding all these opposing difficulties, they are required to maintain a conversation according to the Gospel of Christ. The Lord does not bestow his grace and Spirit without intending to exercise his gifts. "Whom I love, he says, I rebuke and chasten." Abraham would never, probably, have been the Father of the Faithful, had he not been required to offer his beloved son in sacrifice. He was "strong in faith," and his faith was severely tried. And so it is with "*the children* of faithful Abraham." They are oft times troubled, perplexed, persecuted, and cast down. But, by communion with each other, they comfort themselves together. As when one member of the Redeemer's body is honoured, all the members rejoice with it; so when one suffers, all sympathize and suffer with it. And as in our own body, if one member be weaker and less honourable, as St. Paul says, than another, upon that we bestow more abundant honour and attention: so in the Church, the weakest, the most tried and sorrowful Saint, shares the most abundant love and kindness of his fellow-saints. They comfort themselves together—strengthening the weak hands and confirming

the feeble knees. In consolation;^a in pity;^b in prayer;^c in all the intimacies of social life, the Saints have, by mutual sympathy, a fellowship that sweetly gladdens and refreshes them. How often, it may be, have some of you, my people, been “weary and faint in your mind;” dejected and distressed on account of remaining, and sometimes, perhaps, *prevailing* corruptions; mournful because your soul’s Beloved had withdrawn his sensible presence; and ready almost to say—“There is no hope: I am sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before me: I am feeble and sore smitten: unworthy of *all*, who will shew me *any* good?” In such a case you have renewed your intercourse with the Saints, and your communion with them has filled you with new life and love and joy. You came, perhaps, among them sorrowing; you went your way rejoicing. “The spirit of heaviness” has been exchanged for “the garment of praise.” You have said with holy David, “It is good for me to have been in trouble;” and I have no doubt but the comfort you have occasionally found from the society and regards of the Lord’s people, has been to you a foretaste of Heaven’s eternal blessedness itself. You have felt like “a giant refreshed with wine,” nor thought you then that your enemies were at all too many or too mighty for “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” to overcome and to subdue. Your afflictions, too, have felt “light” and in duration momentary, compared with that “eternal weight of glory” which enemies and afflictions are alike designed to “work out for you.” Be, then, agreed to cherish still all the amity and friendliness of brethren one towards another, and thus continue still to *comfort* yourselves together.

Secondly, There is the Advantage of *edification* at-

^a 1 Thess. iv. 18.

^b Rom. xii. 10—16.

^c Eph. vi. 18, 19.

tending the Communion of Saints. They not only comfort themselves together, but they *edify* one another. This is especially the case where people cannot read, or have little leisure to do so. A man, however poor and ignorant he may be, may, by conversation and intercourse with pious Christian brethren, attain, under the enlightening and hallowing influence of the Spirit, an experimental and a practical acquaintance with all the saving Truths of Revelation. If there be but a desire to learn, “a wayfaring man, though a fool” as it regards worldly wisdom, “shall not err therein.” And not merely in the commencement of the spiritual life, but throughout all its succeeding stages, even till grace be consummated in glory, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, may the Saints continue to edify one another. Some may more deeply feel their natural depravity; some may more sensibly enjoy the love of Christ; some may be favoured with more abundant measures of his Spirit; some may have a livelier faith; some clearer and more extensive views of Divine Truth, for “there are diversities of gifts:” but the gifts of every man are given to “profit withal.” Hence in the Church of Christ, “the hand cannot say to the foot, I have no need of you; nor the foot to the hand, I have no need of you.” We are all, as members of one body, needful to each other, and all our gifts and attainments, tend to the “perfecting of the saints and the edifying of the body of Christ.” Sometimes it is humbling, sometimes encouraging, sometimes consoling, always *edifying*, to commune with believers in Jesus. Communion with them exceedingly furthers growth in grace. “Every one pleaseth his neighbour to edification.” “Things wherewith one may edify another” become more and more familiar to all. Such an interchange of thought, of feeling, and affection, produces, often, a

friendship as intimate and endearing as that which subsisted between Jonathan and David. Thus do the Saints by communion with their Lord and with each other in his love, “build themselves up in their most holy faith,” and together “grow up in their Lord in all things.” Is it not so, Beloved? Does not your experience confirm our statement? Have you not learned many useful lessons from Communion with the Saints? And do you not believingly hope that the “top stone” of your salvation will presently be “brought forth,” and the fellowship of the Church in this world be exchanged for the more immediate vision of your Lord, and holier communion with his redeemed people in the world of glory? “Wherefore, then, comfort yourselves together and *edify* one another, even as also ye do.”

Having now offered these remarks on the Communion of Saints, and the Advantages of it; I would RECOMMEND to you, in conclusion, these two things—
1. Religious Intercourse, and 2. Devout Retirement.

I recommend to you,

(1.) *Religious Intercourse.*

Observe, I say *religious* intercourse; for there is an intercourse which seems to be religious, and that really is not so. Many talk *about* Religion and religious things; but they do not (if we may so say) talk *Religion* itself.—Let such “examine themselves, whether they be in the faith.” Again: many professors of godliness are wanting in Christian openness and candour. How freely do people of the world communicate their ideas to each other! Should the people of Jesus Christ be less communicative? How unweariedly do many talk of their temporal affairs, pursuits, aims, and hopes! Should those whom the Lord calls to be saints, and endues with the riches of his grace, be silent? We are

exhorted to “let our conversation be *always* with grace, that it may minister grace to the hearer.” Is it so? Do we converse “*for the use* of edifying?”—I do *not* say we should always be forcing our religious sentiments or opinions upon others: I do *not* say we should ever be communicating our heart-experiences to any one who would be pleased, from motives of curiosity, perhaps, to listen to them: to do so would be imprudent; but this I *do* say, *the bent of our mind* should appear in all our intercourse with others. With those, however, whose thoughts are cleansed and whose dispositions are renewed by the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit, it should be to us a sweet and valuable privilege to “tell of the loving-kindness of the Lord,” and all those things whereby one may comfort and edify another. Look unto Jesus: every thing afforded him subject for profitable remark. A net cast into the sea; a sower going forth to sow; fields whitening to the harvest; water drawn from a well; the grave of a friend—all were profitably noticed by him. And surely if we were more like-minded with our Lord, we should more commonly and fearlessly “speak good of his name,” tell of his wonderful proceedings, and see in all his works and ways and mercies, a something to acknowledge and be thankful for. “We cannot,” said the Apostles, “*but* speak the things which we have heard and seen.” O that *we* might feel the like powerful and constraining necessity! May it be with us as it was with the Psalmist, “a grief to refrain from good words!”—Then, in your occasional and social meetings, cherish a *Spirit* of piety and devotion. Speak of solemn things in a solemn manner. While the ungodly and the irreligious shun not to avow, by all their communications with each other, whose *they* are and whom *they* serve, be you not ashamed of Christ. “Love as brethren: be pitiful:

be courteous." "Let love be without dissimulation: Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." "Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another." Our wish is that you should abound more and more in love, in zeal, in faith, in hope, in every grace that befits your "high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Go on, Beloved, to comfort yourselves together and to edify one another *even as also ye do*. You may yet comfort and edify each other in the ways of holiness and truth till your Lord shall have said to one and all of you, "Come up higher," or, have come again to receive you to himself. We would have you while you sojourn here to "warn them that are unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, to support the weak, and to be patient towards all men." So shall you, as it becometh Saints, "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, in every thing—'at all times and in all places,'—as our Communion Service says—give thanks," and prove this to be "the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Having recommended Religious Intercourse, it only remains for me to recommend

(2.) *Devout Retirement.*

Without devout retirement, the life and power of religion cannot be maintained in the soul. Nothing but occasional communion with our own heart and with the Lord in secret, can counterbalance the influence of the world and the world's necessary cares, upon our minds. Intercourse with others, even on religious accounts, will grow wearisome, unless we gird up the loins of our mind and trim the lamp of our profession at home. It is, too, in their closet that the Saints are privileged with the *most* abundant communications of the Divine

presence and favour. Jesus Christ would not have said —“ But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet” —had not very gracious and peculiar blessings been connected with the duty of private devotion. The “closet” may be *any place* where we can get alone with God. “ Isaac went out into *the field* at even-tide to meditate :” *that* was his closet. Joshua went, by night, into a *valley* to pray for Israel’s success while contending with their enemies : *that* was his closet. Peter went up to the *house-top* to pray ; and *there* did “ He who seeth in secret” meet and commune with him. In like manner may you make any place your closet, and even in the secrecy of thought may you realize your Saviour’s presence and converse with him. Though he be “ the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity,” yet says he, “ will I dwell with him also that is of a lowly and contrite spirit.” Then is our union sweetest both with our Brethren and our Lord, when our minds are most devoutly and thoughtfully recollected. In such a moment we covet not the wealth of worlds. We see the unsatisfactoriness of all things without God. “ Our soul is satisfied, as it were, with marrow and fatness, when our mouths praise him with joyful lips.” Our strength is renewed as the eagle’s : we mount Heavenward in expectation and desire : and we have even to be “ *patient* unto the coming of the Lord.” It becomes a trifle to suffer shame for his sake. Our being called ‘ Saints’ inspires the wish that we may be found really such. We rejoice to differ from our former selves and the generality of our fellow-sinners. Our hearts yearn with real tenderness towards those who so affectedly pretend to pity us. It is unspeakably delightful to feel the quickening and reviving influences of the Spirit of love upon our hearts ; and we would not for a thousand, or ten thousand earthly honours, forfeit our

sainthood and lose the Spirit's grace and comfort. "God hath given us of his Spirit:" follow, Beloved, the drawings of that Spirit when he would lead you into sacred solitude. "My soul followeth hard after thee," said David: so let your's. You have probably read the lives of Janeway, Brainerd, Martyn, and others who now through faith and patience inherit the promises. Do you not remember what *they* thought of devout retirement? what *they* enjoyed when they were alone with God? Then come ye into the secret chamber: Do so purposely to meet your God and Saviour there: Let your fellowship be with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ: Be often silently lifting up your heart in prayer—prayer for yourselves; for your families; for your neighbours; for your ministers; for your fellow-saints; yea, for the whole Church of your Redeemer militant here upon earth. Hence you will thus become blessed with *all* spiritual blessings. As "children of light," your path shall shine into the perfect day. From the Mount of Communion with God, you will descend to engage anew in the scenes of active life, with a character irradiated with Christian meekness and benignity, and while you are "saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation," that Lord also himself will presently come to be "glorified in his Saints and admired in all them that believe."

And now, "*the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.* AMEN."

SERMON XVIII.

GETHSEMANE.

JOHN XVIII. 2.

Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples.

IN the future and everlasting kingdom of the Redeemed, concerning which we read in Dan. vii. 13, 14, and 27, the one subject of their unwearied contemplations and their ceaseless songs, will be—the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain. The great, the amazing, work of human Redemption, is that subject particularly into which the angels desire to look ; but which, even they, with all their enlarged and comprehensive powers, cannot fully conceive or understand. The love of the Redeemer to the objects of his redeeming favour “passeth knowledge.” Its “riches” are “unsearchable.” If, for a moment, we endeavour to realize the thought of God’s co-equal, co-eternal, Son assuming our nature : if we try to place the Lord Jesus Christ before us,—contemplate his mysterious person as at once divine and human, and think upon his character, work, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and his advent

in glory, our thoughts are lost in adoring wonder and reverential awe. Indeed the *more* we think of him—his life of privation and sorrow, his death of ignominy and woe, and what both his active and passive obedience was designed to accomplish, the *less* we seem to perceive of “the breadth and length, the depth and height” of our Redeemer’s love. We should contemplate all those things which our Lord both did and suffered. It is well, however, not to attempt too much at once; but to confine our attention to some particular incident, and to think on others as seasons and opportunities allow. Our present subject of contemplation will, therefore, be—The Saviour’s retirement previous to his betrayal and crucifixion.

Jesus was resolved to go with his Disciples and Friends to Jerusalem. With “desire had He desired” to eat his final Passover with them there. It was while celebrating the Paschal supper that he instituted the Ordinance which was to perpetuate the memory of his death till his re-appearance in the clouds of heaven. After supper he took a towel and girded himself; poured water into a basin; and washed his disciples’ feet—thus significantly taking upon him “the form of a servant,” and thereby demonstrating his willingness to purify and to bless his people. He now announced to them his intended departure from the world. Observing that announcement to fill their hearts with sorrow, he told them of his Father’s house, wherein were many mansions, and where he would himself prepare a place for them. He assured them, moreover, of the expediency of *his* going away, in order that another and an abiding Comforter might come. And when he had prayed both for his immediate followers, and for all them also who should ever thereafter believe on him through their word, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron,

where was a garden, into which he entered with his disciples : And Judas also knew the place, for—*Jesus oft-times resorted thither with his disciples.*

In leading your contemplations on this interesting fact, I shall notice

I. The *Place* whither our Lord resorted.

And II. The *Purpose* for which he resorted thither.

I notice

I. The *Place* whither our Lord resorted.

It was a *Garden*. This garden, we learn from Matthew xxvi. 36, was called *Gethsemane*. It was so called, perhaps, on account of the Olive trees growing on the adjacent hill ; or on account, more probably, of its own rich and beautiful luxuriance ; Gethsemane signifying, the valley of oil. It was, doubtless, a secluded and lovely spot. It seems plainly to have been a very favourite place of resort with our Lord : for “ Jesus oft-times resorted thither.” Often, it may be, after the wearying labours of the day, did Jesus retire for rest and quiet to Gethsemane. Often might its soothing solitude refresh his spirit when thus apart from the turmoil of the city ; and frequently might the stillness of the scene be broken by his earnest cries and prayers. There might his liberal soul devise the liberal things of our salvation. There might he more familiarly and graciously instruct the first Heralds of the Cross in the mysteries of that Gospel they were subsequently to preach unto others. But, above all, there may we believe our adorable Redeemer anticipated his final sorrows. He knew that the burden of the world’s atonement was upon him—he knew that he must tread this winepress alone—alone achieve our recovery from sin, degradation, and ruin. ‘ *Here,*’ then, might he think, as he resorted to

Gethsemane, ‘here am I to suffer : here am I to agonize for man’s redemption : here am I to receive a cup which may not pass from me except I drink it : here have I a baptism of blood to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished !’ Nor is it a matter of little moment that Jesus was wont thus to resort unto a Garden. A Divine and peculiar providence doubtless over-ruled and controuled the most inconsiderable event of our Redeemer’s life : we cannot, therefore, but assume that his resorting to Gethsemane was a providential circumstance. It was in a *Garden* the first Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, and thereby brought upon himself and all his offspring the displeasure of an offended God : In what place more appropriately could the second Adam sustain the punishment of sin, and redeem his spiritual seed, than a *Garden* ?—The Garden of Eden was a Garden of Pleasure : all was satisfying goodness and pure enjoyment there. Man’s gracious Maker placed him in it to “till and dress it,” walking himself therein in condescending kindness : but alas ! Adam proudly aspired to be “as God,” and he was driven from it. In perfect contrast to this, Gethsemane was a Garden of Woe : it was night when Jesus resorted thither : the humiliation of the Highest must now be marked by pain and travail, and this in order to the restoration of our rebel race to honour and felicity ; nor did our Lord quit the precincts of this sacred spot till he could go forth as the prevailing Intercessor and the Almighty Saviour of his people. Though, then, in Eden we unhappily fell, in Gethsemane we triumphed over our great adversary. In the *one* man alienated himself from God ; in the *other* a door of access to God and to friendly communion with him was opened to us again. In the *one* the curse was first pronounced ; in the *other* the blessing was contended for and won. Such was the

place whither Jesus so often resorted. His disciples, we can easily conceive, loved the hallowed scene: for “*with his disciples*” did Jesus oft resort thither. And who of all the true followers of Christ will not love Gethsemane? What though it be lonely and retired? What though the chills and gloom of sorrow surround us there? With Jesus, the Christian everywhere feels secure and happy. Waters, clearer and sweeter than those which refreshed Gethsemane, gladden and refresh the believing heart. These flow from “the throne of God and of the Lamb,” and are indeed waters of comfort and streams of quietness to all who feed beside them. Jesus loves to see his disciples with him in a “solitary place, apart” from the converse and noise of a world that will not receive him; he delights especially to be with them in Gethsemane; and thither also do “those Ministers of his who do his pleasure” particularly desire to lead their people. Thither, Beloved, may you oft resort, and there may you continue to hold felt and strengthening communion with your present though unseen Saviour!

Having led you to contemplate the *Place* whither our Lord resorted, I come to notice,

II. The *Purpose* for which he resorted thither.

It was to *suffer*. This we have already intimated: but, a more particular mention of the Purpose for which Jesus resorted to Gethsemane, will not, we trust, be otherwise than profitable to us.

Jesus cometh, and with him his disciples, into the Garden. To eight of them he says, “Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.” Three—Peter, James, and John, he takes with him into a farther and more

secluded part of the Garden. These had seen his glory on mount Tabor—had seen him when his face and raiment shone with lucid brightness, and his essential deity was discoverable through the veil of his humanity : They were now to witness his sorrow in Gethsemane. Now it was he began to be *sorrowful*—says the Evangelist Matthew, and *sore amazed*, says the Evangelist Mark. “My soul, remarks the suffering Saviour to the chosen three, is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death ;”—“*sorrowful* ;” yea, “*exceeding* sorrowful ;” sorrowful “*even unto death*.” But wherefore was our Lord thus overwhelmed with distress and anguish ? Did not the Hebrew youths endure, unmoved, the fury of their murderous enemies ? Did not Daniel feel composed and tranquil in the lion’s den ? Was not Paul ready not only to be bound but also to suffer death in the cause of righteousness and truth ? Has not many a martyr triumphed amidst the flames of martyrdom, and risen to glory through wrongs and sufferings the most appalling and terrific ? Yes : but these had not the *purpose* to accomplish which was to be effected by the Son of God. The sufferings of Christ were the sufferings of the innocent for the guilty,—the required atonement for sin, the ransom-price of our redemption, the discharge of that debt whereof we had “nothing to pay.” Our adorable Jesus was the Lamb which God had provided himself for a burnt-offering. His blood was at once to expiate our guilt, to satisfy the demands of infinite justice, to display a holy God’s unalterable hatred of sin, and his unbounded and everlasting love towards sinners. To fulfil this gracious purpose did Jesus Christ become our Surety, and therefore it was that his soul was so sore amazed, and sorrowful even unto death.

The Sacred History now proceeds to say—“Jesus

went a little further" into the shades of the Garden, "*and kneeled down.*" Nor that alone; so strongly moved were his compassionate and tender feelings, that "*he fell on the ground,*" and whilst prostrate "*on his face,*" he prayed that if it were possible this hour of suffering and pain might pass from him. How wonderful was this! HE to whom "every knee shall bow," himself a petitioner on his knees! HE before whose awful and majestic presence "the heavens and the earth shall flee away," prostrate on his face! HE who is the source and centre of all happiness and glory to the whole intelligent creation, praying that an hour of darkness and sorrow might pass from him! Surely the purpose for which this was endured must be all-worthy of the infinitely good and gracious God to devise and execute. Surely, too, the application of that accomplished purpose to a sinner, must be all-sufficient for the soul's necessities. O how should Gethsemane win our regards and thoughts! how should we love to "tarry here and watch" with Jesus!—But, hark: the Sufferer prays; "O, my Father, if it be possible, if thou be willing, remove this cup; let it pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."^a Alas! it might not pass from him or be removed: Jesus came not to do his own will, but the will of him who sent him. Had this hour, with its cup of untold woe, passed from him, how then had the Scriptures been fulfilled? How had human guilt been expiated? How had the flaming sword which guarded the way of access to the tree of life been sheathed? What blood of atonement could have sprinkled the mercy-seat, or have cleansed our heart from an evil and condemning conscience, and opened for us a way through the vail into the holiest of

^a Matt. xxvi. 39, with Luke xxii. 42.

all? Jesus therefore resigned *his* to his *Father's* will. The cup indeed contained a potion of extremest bitterness: nature shrunk from tasting it: it would fain that this cup should pass from it: but the Divine Surety was strengthened to endure it, and, in the extremest suffering, he was enabled to say—"Not my will, but thine be done." O let our too often murmuring and repining hearts hence learn to be submissive. "Should it be according to thy will" concerning any thing, when the Redeemer acquiesced so entirely in his Father's will concerning his cross and passion? Rather let us say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And let us remember, how bitter soever may be its contents, it is a *Father* who mingles the cup for us, and who will, if we ask him, enable us to drink it.

Jesus now "cometh to his disciples and findeth them asleep." What an additional grief to his holy mind was here! The presence of a kind and sympathizing friend in sorrow is sweetly soothing and consoling; but Jesus must suffer alone—unwatched, unheeded. Even to the so lately zealous and courageous Peter, he is necessitated to say, "Simon, sleepest *thou*? couldst not *thou* watch with me one hour?" True; our Lord pities the weakness and unprofitableness of "the flesh" in his disciples; but whilst he does so, he still exhorts his followers to "watch and pray." "Let *us* not, then, sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober." Cold and listless must be the heart that can slumber and be careless in Gethsemane! Jesus is but a little yonder suffering according to the will of God, and accomplishing by the greatness of his might "the determined counsel" of his Father, and the eternal salvation of our souls. How grieved does our Lord appear when he says, "*Could ye not watch with me?*" Let us beware how we grieve him "*afresh*" by an unwatchful and a prayerless spirit.

“He went (we read) away again”—retired again into his more sacred solitude to pray. In prayer he repeated the same words. Still his suffering was extreme, but still his purpose was determined: still he prevails to endure the hour and to drink the cup: still we hear the voice of resignation in the words—“Thy will be done.” He knew that if he failed to expiate our sins, we must have borne the wrath due to them for ever: He knew that if he brake not the head of our great Enemy, we should have continued still the dupes of Satan and the slaves of lust: he therefore struggled on, nor did he yield until his own Almighty arm brought salvation to him. Once more does he return to his Disciples: but, finding them asleep again, he now leaves them undisturbed, and goes and prays “the third time, saying the same words.” This third prayer brought him “an angel from Heaven,” who appeared unto him and strengthened him. His soul might possibly be refreshed by “the joy that was set before him” of glorifying his Father’s attributes, and redeeming immortal though lost and perishing sinners. He might be reminded, too, of the satisfaction he should feel when he should see his Seed around his throne in the prolonged days of his eternal kingdom, and the pleasure of the Lord should for ever prosper in his hands. A gracious strength, however, is seldom communicated without being exercised. It was *after* the angel’s appearance that our Lord, “being in an agony, prayed more earnestly;” and *then* it was that “his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” Now was the decisive moment come: Now were the enemy’s fiercest advances made: Now was the all of our salvation to be gained or lost for ever: but with his increasing “agony,” Jesus “prayed more fervently;” and though in the wondrous contest, his “sweat was, as it were, blood,” yet did he triumph,—

the principalities and the powers of Hell, fell prostrate,—the hour of darkness was endured, justice was satisfied, and a ruined world was saved. With “strong cries and tears,” indeed, did our Lord contend; but he prevailed. Agonize, indeed, he did; but he triumphed. His blood, too, bedewed the soil of Gethsemane; but it cried—not with a voice like that of Abel’s for vengeance on the murderous Cain, but rather—“Father, forgive them!” And what a scene was here! The Son of God incarnate travailing in agony to accomplish a purpose which would bring everlasting honour to the blessed Godhead, fill the heavenly hosts with admiring wonder, and every contrite sinner with humble joy. Well may we love the place where Jesus resorted with his Disciples, and well may we delight to linger in contemplation on the sufferings endured in Gethsemane.

Jesus cometh to his still slumbering followers and announces to them his immediate betrayal: “Behold, he is at hand that doth betray me: Rise! let us be going:” and “while he yet spake, lo! Judas, and with him a great multitude,” came to apprehend him. With a mind softened by sorrow and rendered now all-submissive to the Father’s will, Jesus advanced to meet them; and knowing the glory that should follow his further humiliation, he meekly resigned himself into their power. And “he was lead as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.”

But we will not now, my Brethren, follow our suffering Lord beyond the bounds of Gethsemane. Let us “tarry here” awhile; and before we quit the place of our Redeemer’s agony and bloody sweat, let us pause, and solemnly enquire how we may best improve our visit there.

I think, then, we may perceive in the sorrows of the Garden

(1.) *The real nature of Sin.*

Sin—*Sin*, which the generality of mankind make so light of, was the occasion of all the woe which we have contemplated in Gethsemane. Though God willeth not the death of a sinner, yet because of the essential holiness of the Divine character, he must necessarily abominate sin. As the good, the just, and holy God, he cannot but condemn and punish the transgression of his good, just, and holy Law. Condemn and punish it he will. His Law must be magnified either by the obedience—the sinless obedience, of his creatures; or by a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for their violation of it. This atonement it was not in our power to make. The Lamb through whose bloodshedding the destroying Angel will pass over us, must be “without spot or blemish.” This Lamb we can only find in the person of our Lord: He is emphatically, “Jesus Christ *the righteous*.” There is a virtue, therefore, in *his* blood infinitely available for the remission of human guilt. In the very means of mercy, however, we see “the exceeding sinfulness of sin,” and God’s utter abhorrence of iniquity. In the humiliation and sufferings of Jesus Christ, there is depth of woe which we may indeed contemplate, but which we shall, perhaps, never fully understand. Then what must SIN be?—In the watery deluge that once drowned all the world except eight persons; in the fiery trial that yet awaits it; and in the “everlasting burnings” beyond it, we see and shall see, in some measure, what Sin is: but it is in the sufferings of the Son of God, that we more distinctly perceive its turpitude. Then, O ye who love Sin, live in Sin, “*make a mock*

of Sin," look yonder: Who is he that lies stretched upon the ground in agony and blood? It is Jesus Christ: Who hath thus "smitten him and put him to grief?" God; "it pleased the Lord to bruise him:" For what purpose? To expiate the guilt of your transgressions. And whilst, O Sinner, you continue willingly and wilfully in a course of sin, you "crucify to yourself the Son of God afresh." Yes: every oath a swearer utters; every Sabbath a Sinner breaks; every thought a man indulges that is contrary to the will and word of God, is, as it were, a thorn, or a nail, or a spear, which pierces Jesus Christ anew. Be it, too, remembered that though no gross immoralities may mark the outward life and conduct, yet that not to love Christ, is sin:^a not to value his Word and the Communion of his body and blood, is sin:^b not to yield ourselves a living sacrifice unto God, is sin:^c not to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, is sin:^d not to endeavour the good of the Redeemer's servants and followers, is sin.^e Sins of omission no less than sins of commission, did Jesus suffer for: and unless our sins are remitted by faith in his atoning blood, the sorrow which he endured for a season, we must endure for ever. Then look unto him whom ye have pierced, and mourn for him as ye would mourn the loss of a first-born or an only son. Go with your suffering Lord to Gethsemane, nor ever quit the Garden of his Passion till you have learned to abhor both yourselves and your iniquities, and proved the power of a Saviour's blood to cleanse you from all your sin.

May we not also perceive

(2.) *The proper antidote to trouble?*

^a 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

^b John vi. 53.

^c Rom. xii. 1.

^d Tit. ii. 12.

^e 1 John iii. 17.

This is acquiescence in the Divine will. Suffering, more or less, is the lot of all God's people in this world. "What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" And shall the children of the everlasting Father be without chastisement? No: "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and correcteth every son whom he receiveth." Tribulation is the heaven-appointed way to the rest which *remaineth* for us. "Through sufferings, was the great Captain of our Salvation perfected." We have contemplated the anguish of his soul in Gethsemane, and seen with how much propriety he might say, "Behold and see; was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger?" And how did Jesus Christ endure the conflicts of the Garden? By acquiescing in his Father's will, and begging with repeated supplication that his Father's will, and no will in opposition to it, might be done. Here is our Exemplar in trying and afflictive circumstances. Have we fellowship with Christ in suffering? Let us not aggravate our sorrow by "fretting against the Lord." Let us not professedly say, "*Thy* will be done," and secretly affect our own. No affliction happens by chance to the disciple of Jesus. He is "greatly beloved."^a The "very hairs of his head are numbered." No one may do him harm, but Jehovah's eye is touched.^b Saul persecuted the members of Christ's body upon earth; the Head in glory felt it.^c Then, it will be our truest wisdom, under all dispensations, however troublous, to say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." This will tend materially to alleviate our pain—consolation will mingle with our tribulation and perhaps exceed it, and being "saved from *wrath* through Christ," all

^a Dan. ix. 23.^b Zech. ii. 8.^c Acts ix. 5.

other trials will be light—we shall “believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living;” and anticipate a full and everlasting deliverance from pain and trouble when our now triumphing Saviour shall have brought us through death and the grave to glory with himself.

But, I think, we may further perceive

(3.) and lastly, *The privilege of prayer.*

It is at *all* times a privilege to pray, but it is more especially so in *seasons of tribulation*. In this also, as in every thing pertaining to the Christian character, our adorable Redeemer “hath left us an example.” How often did he retire to “a solitary place apart to pray!” How did he “pour out his heart” in lone Gethsemane! Again and again did he pray; nor did he cease to pray but with his expiring breath. His prayers increased in depth of feeling and fervour with his increasing agony. Though not, indeed, answered in the particular matter of his prayer, yet was he answered in a way the most consistent with the Divine wisdom and prudence. And how pained was he with the conduct of his followers! Again and again did he exhort them to watch and *pray*: and wherefore? Because he knew full well how much watchfulness and prayer would avail for their good. I fear this same Jesus comes and finds too many of us careless and remiss in this duty. Perhaps there are some persons who cannot watch with him one hour, and others that are not disposed to watch with him at all. O vile ingratitude! Would it be deemed a privilege to ask some earthly Potentate a favour when and as often as we pleased? How much greater should we deem the privilege of “access with boldness to the throne of grace!” Let us cease, Beloved, to go about to tell our wants, and cares, and sorrows to the world,

and let us say with David, "*When my soul is in heaviness, I will complain unto God.*" As in the case of David's greater Son, let us pray more frequently and earnestly as our distresses multiply. Troubles may be coming upon you that you are little aware of. The pains of dissolution even may be nearer than you suppose. Stand, then, each of you, on your watch-tower: "Be ye alway ready"—ready to obey the voice which will soon say unto us—"Rise, let us go hence:" and when ye go hence, may it be to follow your gracious Lord—not to a Gethsemane of woe and blood, but—to a paradise of unmingled pleasure and of ceaseless praise!

"Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all!"

SERMON XIX.

THE CROSS OF JESUS.

JOHN XIX. 25.

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

THE cross of Jesus ! what an interesting, what (if we may so say) a painfully pleasing subject of contemplation to all who love a crucified Redeemer. The cross of Jesus ! The mere mention of it is calculated to move the sympathies and to concentrate the regards of every tender and enlightened mind. There is nothing, surely, in the heavens above or in the earth beneath—nothing in either the volume of nature or the volume of inspiration, that possesses half the excellence of the cross of Jesus. That cross which the “betrayers and murderers” of the Lord thought was to stigmatize him with infamy, is become the ensign of his renown. The preaching of it is the unfurled banner to which “all nations and kindreds and people and tongues” shall ultimately gather. Inasmuch as the Son of God “became obedient unto

death, even the death of the cross ;” inasmuch as he was a reproach of men and despised of the people ; laughed to scorn ; poured out like water ; enclosed by the assembly of the wicked ; pierced in his hands and feet, and still more severely tried by the withdrawment of his Father’s presence ; therefore shall all the ends of the world remember and turn unto the Lord ; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him in reward of his soul’s travail. “ And I, said the Lord himself, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This said he, signifying by what death he should die.”—May it be given us to feel the attractive influence of our Saviour’s cross, and may we love like Mary his mother, and Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, to ponder the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ.

I purpose to consider the text *first*, with reference to the individuals spoken of in it ; and *secondly*, with reference to ourselves : Let us consider it,

I. With reference to the individuals spoken of in it :

Mary, the mother of Jesus ; Mary, the wife of Cleophas ; and Mary Magdalene, are the individuals spoken of as standing by the cross of our Lord. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, all take particular notice, in their respective histories, of the women who ministered unto Jesus, and followed him to Calvary. St. John, however, is the only Evangelist who mentions three of them by name. He does so, perhaps, as writing subsequently to the other Evangelists, and as having himself stood with the Marys by the cross of his Master and observed them there. They were, moreover, persons peculiarly characterized and therefore also wor-

thy to be specifically mentioned. Mary, the mother of Jesus, would naturally feel a deep and solemn interest in all that befel her divine and gracious Son. To her, as the chosen daughter of faithful Abraham, it had been said, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus." Though lowly born and cradled in a manger, angels had carolled his birth and the virgin mother had seen gifts, "gold, frankincense, and myrrh," presented with profoundest adoration and respect to her new-born child. To her and his reputed father, Jesus had been meekly subject in the days of his early youth. She herself had sung, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour:" and therefore neither her personal exposure to danger, the mockery of a rude and lawless rabble, nor the melancholy sadness of the passing scene, could keep her from her Saviour's cross.— Mary, the wife of Cleophas, was one of the pious and devoted women who ministered of their substance to the temporal wants of our Lord. It is not determined in the original whether she was the *wife*, the *mother*, or the *daughter* of Cleophas: but it is generally believed she was his wife, and that he was also called Alpheus, and was the father, as this Mary was the mother, of James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas, who are consequently called our Lord's brethren or kinsmen.^a Be this, however, as it may, she was ardently and devoutly attached to her Lord. She had followed him with alacrity; had ministered to him cheerfully; had hung delightedly on the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth; had witnessed his power to heal

^a Matt. xii. 46. Mark vi. 3.

diseases, to forgive sin and to save sinners ; and how could she but stand by his cross ?—The other Mary, called also Magdalene, is supposed by some to have been a woman of Magdala, a large and populous town, near the lake Tiberias, in Galilee ; and therefore denominated Mary Magdalene, or Mary of Magdala : but, we incline rather to think that this individual is the same we read of in the viith. chap. of St. Luke's Gospel, and who so remarkably lay at the Redeemer's feet, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. She had been a notorious sinner : she was consequently disdained and contemned by those who knew her. She, however, became convinced of her sinfulness : she learned that Jesus Christ was the Friend of sinners : she came to him with contrition and tears : the proud and envious Simon despises her : the meek and lowly, the kind and holy Jesus, graciously receives her ; acknowledges her love, assures her of her forgiveness, and bids her go in peace. So truly do penitent "publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God" before unhumiliated and self-righteous formalists. And where, with more propriety, could a Magdalene be found than by the cross of Jesus ? With feelings peculiarly her own—with much love, because much was forgiven her—would Mary Magdalene gaze upon the pierced and dying Saviour. 'There,' might Mary the mother of Jesus say, 'There dies my *Son*, my dear and duteous Son ; the promised Seed ; the Desire of nations ; Israel's Glory ; the Gentiles' Light ; the Lord of life to dying souls :' and, 'There,' might his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, say, 'There dies my *Friend* ; the Friend to whose wants I have so gladly ministered ; the Friend whose presence has cheered my heart ; whose voice was music in mine ear, and whose word was the food and sustenance of my faith and

hope :’ but, ‘ There,’ might the Magdalene say, ‘ There dies my *Saviour* ; there dies that condescending Lord who did not spurn a sinful, guilty, polluted woman from his feet ; there dies that Lord whose forgiving love bade my sorrows cease, wiped my tearful eyes, and blessed me with a peace unfelt in the ways of worldliness and sin.’ Who cannot but admire the generous zeal and the courageous constancy of these pious followers of Jesus Christ ! In their view the ignominy of the cross was lost in its surpassing claims to admiration and respect. Through all its shame, they saw the excellence and the fulness of God’s redeeming mercy. As they stood thereby, no object in the visible creation could so powerfully win their regards and contemplations as this. ‘ The cross of Jesus ! O with what tenderness, with what deep and adoring wonder, did it fill them ! Their Saviour’s every look, every deed, every word, would, we can easily imagine, be indelibly engraven upon their hearts. His cross alone would they henceforward and only glory in. When, by the Spirit’s testimony, they should see more fully the richness, the fulness, the preciousness, of the great Atonement, still dearer to them would be the sufferings and death of their Lord. They would see their eternal all involved in the mysterious scene before them. Should any insolently ask them, ‘ Was not your Jesus crucified ? Was he not crucified with thieves and malefactors ? Was he not reviled and mocked, spit upon and crowned in derision with a wreath of thorns ? Did any of the chief priests or of the rulers believe on him ?’ Yes ; they would answer, our Lord was crucified : well do we recollect the melancholy scene : but well do we remember too how dimly shone the sun even at noon-day : what a preternatural darkness covered the land : how the solid earth quaked beneath our feet, and the rocks of Calvary were rent asunder ; and do not these

things bespeak Majesty in distress, and the putting forth of godlike power for the achievement of some mighty and wondrous enterprise? Why did all creation sympathize with this mysterious Sufferer? Why, when the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw what was done, why did they fear? Was it not their own acknowledgment, “Truly this was the Son of God?” And what if the chief priests and elders believed not on him? shall their unbelief make our faith void? We believe and are sure that Jesus was numbered with transgressors, and nailed to the accursed tree, and crowned with lacerating thorns, and subjected to the cruel hatred and needless barbarism of his creatures, in love to his creatures’ souls, and for the expiation of their guilt; and as in his immediate followers, so in all who shall ever hereafter believe on him, you may see the powerful and gracious effects of his cross.’—Our Lord marked the attendance of these pious women on his crucifixion. To his mother he said, “Woman;” commending her to his beloved disciple, John, and bidding her to regard him as a son. It was to Mary Magdalene that he first appeared on the morning of his resurrection from the dead. And the husband of the other Mary was one of the two disciples that subsequently walked so sorrowfully to Emmaus, and to whom Jesus drew nigh and expounded all things written in the Law of Moses, in the Psalms, and in the Prophets concerning himself. The Lord Jesus well knows those who love him; and with gracious complacency, doubtless, did he observe Mary his mother; and his mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene, standing by his cross.

From considering our text with respect to the individuals spoken of in it, let us notice it

II. With reference to ourselves :

And first it will be proper to observe, that the cross, or the crucified Jesus, which the Marys beheld with their bodily eyes, we must behold by faith. They were actual spectators of the marvellous scene : we are believers only in it. Nor, be it remembered, will others' personal witness of the death of Christ, supersede the necessity of our belief of it. Each one of us individually must look unto Jesus and experience redemption in his blood for himself. As in the wilderness of Sinai, when the children of Israel were bitten, because of their sinful provocations, by serpents : the look of one man to the serpent of brass, would not heal another ; so no more will the Marys standing by the cross avail any thing to our salvation, unless we each receive the atonement made thereby. Noticing, then, the text with reference to ourselves, I ask

Would we have our sins forgiven ? Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus*. Though by "wicked hands he was crucified and slain," yet is his death the meritorious means of our forgiveness. "Him hath God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." He laid down his life for our sakes. He suffered, the just for the unjust, and through him is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. Then would we that our heart should be cleansed from an evil conscience ? Let us come to the blood of sprinkling. Unhappily, when we feel our guiltiness we are prone to resort to other expedients for pardon and peace, rather than come immediately and directly to the cross of Christ. But all unavailing do we prove them. Other sacrifice for sin, except the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is none. And why should we hesitate to expect forgiveness through it ? If the death of Christ satisfy the of-

fended justice of the high and holy One, ought it not to pacify our scruples and to assure us that “with the Lord there is mercy, and with our God is plenteous redemption?” Who can conceive the infinitude of love that is involved in the incarnation and sufferings of the Son of God! Angels in the loftiest range of their intellectual powers, cannot grasp it. “It passeth knowledge.” Do we believe this? Then may every individual believer amongst us bow his ear with heedful and delighted attention to the voice which says—“Deliver him from going down into the pit; for I have found a ransom.”

Again: *Would we have our iniquities subdued?* Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus*. We know full well what it is to have been led captive by the Devil at his will. Perhaps even now sinful propensities often gain the mastery over us. Corruption is prevalent and grace decays. But, let us recollect the garden of Gethsemane and the cross of Calvary. Let us see with what strong cries and tears our Saviour interposed to deliver us from the Law of sin and death, and to bring us under a Dispensation of grace and mercy. In the recollection of the cross, let us remember the promise, “I will subdue all thine enemies.” There is with him “a power whereby he is *able even to subdue all things* to himself.” Our will, our affections, our memory, and imagination, he can bring into sweet and entire subserviency to the Law of the Spirit of Life. And nothing will so effectually loosen “the bands of wickedness,” as contemplation on the cross. ‘You must resolve against sin,’ would many say; ‘and do your utmost to overcome it.’ Resolve against sin we should; but never shall we overcome it but by the blood of the Lamb.^a It is *that*

^a Rev. xii. 11.

which both cleanseth from the guilt and rescueth from the power of sin. In view of a bleeding Saviour, seen by faith, we shall become pure and holy. His cross will make us virtuous and moral, and while we stand thereby, we may pray confidently in the words of Micah, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."^a In this way may "Holiness to the Lord" characterize every really gracious disciple of Jesus Christ.

I ask, moreover, *Would we be softened into penitential sorrow?* Would we feel that tenderness of spirit which brings with it its own peculiar and delightful solace? Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus*. Oh! it is pleasant to realize the meltings of a grateful tenderness at the foot of the cross. How were the pious sensibilities of the Marys moved as they stood and mourned for him! Many lament the consequences of sin in both themselves and others, but without any adequate sense of sin's exceeding sinfulness, or any proper contrition of spirit in the remembrance of the Saviour's cross and passion. It is natural to shrink from pain and to dread the occasion of it: it is not in nature to "be in bitterness for Jesus and to mourn for him as one mourneth for an only son." Tender-heartedness is best learned at the cross. When we can most feelingly enter into the condescending kindness, and the dying love of Christ, then shall we ourselves be most truly kind, conciliating, and affectionate. Our mercy towards each other will resemble the mercy of God towards us all: that is emphatically "tender:"

^a Micah vii. 18, 19.

and happy are we if, from the cross of God's beloved Son, we have acquired a contrite and a lowly temper.

Further: *Would we preserve serenity and peacefulness of spirit?* Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus*. Legal fears; recollected or repeated sins; failures in duty; continued consciousness of imperfection; to which may be added, also, outward and temporal cares; family bereavements, and the various circumstances of our several positions in society, will frequently disturb our quiet, and interrupt the mind's placidity. Now, nothing will so effectually quell the mental strife as meditation on the death of Christ. Wild may be the tumult of conflicting opinions, and contrariety may pervade all human schemes and devisings; but, "Thou wilt keep him (may the Christian believer, appealing to his Saviour-God, exclaim) in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.—Trust ye, then, in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." When sensible of our frailty; when weary of the world's unprofitable converse, or disgusted with its shallow and formal friendships; when mournful because, perhaps, one dear to us as our own soul is lost to us; or, in fine, when any of the various evils to which humanity is liable press sore upon us, let us "look unto Jesus." His cross will benignly tranquillize our perturbed spirits. Armed with the same mind that was in our Lord, let us meet our appointed trials; the radiancy of the Gospel-hope will cheer the gloom of our passing trouble; and beyond the scene of our "short afflictions," we shall perceive a world "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest"—where tears shall be wiped away, and all shall be quietness and assurance for ever. It will commonly be found, upon enquiry, that *then* are we the least composed and tranquil when most forgetful of Jesus crucified. Let experience then tend to induce us

to “hold us fast by God.” And when we find ourselves at a darkening distance from him, let us beware how we hesitate and delay to “arise and go to our Father.” Many think to heal their backslidings by their own attempts, and by other means than the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ: this is wrong: an immediate and direct return to the Friend and Saviour of sinners should be determined on. As at the first “redemption—even the forgiveness of sins,” was found in “the blood” of Christ, so must it ever be found anew till we stand without fault before the throne of God. It is here that many, through their own simplicity, or the mistaken advices of others, oftentimes needlessly perplex themselves, and perpetuate the anxieties they wish to avoid. From the beginning to the consummation of our piety, the cross of Jesus must be both our peace-restorer and peace-preserver. By the blood of his cross hath he made peace. We are thereby called to peace; it is thereby we have peace; and thereby we must regain peace when, through infirmity or temptation, we have lost it: for, “By his stripes we are healed.”

I would ask also, *Would we be crucified unto the world?* Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus*. What was the world, either in its prosperous or adverse circumstances, to Mary the mother of Jesus, to his mother’s sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, or to Mary Magdalene? In the dying of their Lord, they seemed to die: temporal things receded from their view, and all the realities of eternity crowded round them. Would we it were thus with us? It is the cross of Jesus that must deaden our affections toward this world and waken our anticipations of another. Paul could say, “I am crucified with Christ;” and though he lived, yet it was not so much himself that lived, as Christ living in him, influencing his heart and subduing all his heart’s desires

and affections to himself. When any feel it to be hard to give up some carnal pleasure or some worldly advantage that is not compatible with a professed subjection to Jesus Christ, let them enquire whether they recollect their Saviour's cross? how lately they stood beside it? and whether they ought not cheerfully to sacrifice their all for him, who gave *himself* a sacrifice for them? Will the haunts of sinful dissipation be desired, if "the place where Jesus was crucified" be loved? Will "wages of iniquity" and gains of unrighteousness be coveted in the believing contemplation of him who "though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor?"

As by the light of opening day,
The stars are all conceal'd;
So earthly pleasures fade away,
When Jesus is reveal'd.

And as Jesus our Lord "endured the cross, despising or overlooking its shame," *Would we take up our daily cross with cheerfulness?* It is the cross that he endured which alone will enable us to do so. Let us, then, stand by *the cross of Jesus*. Let us mark its varied sufferings. See the Saviour bound and scourged. Behold him reviled and set at nought. Hear the taunts and mockeries of his enemies. Observe how he faints beneath the wood he is presently to be affixed to. "I thirst," he says: "gall mixed with vinegar" is given him to drink. "Was ever sorrow like unto his sorrow?" Was ever innocence so calumniated? Was ever love so scorned? And yet was ever sin's malicious enmity to holiness so meekly borne? How truly was he "a reproach of men and despised of the people!"^a But this offended not the Marys; they steadfastly adhered to

^a Psalm xxii. 6.

their suffering Lord. "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."^a A cross every faithful follower of Christ must bear. The Scripture pointedly and undisguisedly declares, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus *shall* suffer persecution."^b It is, confessedly, painful to endure the neglect and unkindness of friends, and the enmity of persons that we seek to benefit: in the contemplation of a Saviour's sorrows, however, our sorrows will be mitigated or forgotten. When we think of the Jews saying—"Away with him, crucify him;" and stand by him as he hangs amidst the revilings of the multitude, O, it will be quite possible meekly to suffer our names to be cast out as evil, and with Jesus himself to say, "This is *their* hour." *Our* hour will come; and when those feet that were once nailed to the accursed tree shall tread the clouds of heaven, and those hands that once held a reed in mockery shall hold the scales of an unerring judgment, and those eyes that were once closed in death shall meet us brilliant with love and glory, then "shall our innocency appear clear as the light and our just dealing as the noon-day." "Father, forgive them," did Jesus cry? and shall we not "forgive every one his brother their trespasses?" Let us rather "take wrong." Let us quell every complaining of our heart with the question, 'Did not Jesus suffer?' "Therefore let *us* both labour and suffer reproach;" and "esteem," like Moses, "the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt," or all the wealth of worlds.

Would we truly love the Lord and Saviour of our souls? Let us stand by his cross. Boundless is the love we owe him. Infinitely below his desert do we esteem him. This we often feel, and we grieve to feel it.

^a Heb. xiii. 13.

^b 2 Tim. iii. 12.

Many persons complain of their want of love to God : —‘ they do not love him as they would : and on this account they fear God does not love them.’ Think of the cross : go, and behold its woes and sorrows : Can you doubt the love of him whose heart-blood streams upon it ? Why does he die ? “ for the joy set before him ” — the joy of magnifying his Father’s attributes, and rescuing immortal sinners from perdition. “ In his love and in his pity does he redeem us. ” — Shall I be permitted to observe that herein, I think, we err ? we look too much at our love to Jesus Christ and too little contemplate his love to us. Our love ? what is it at the most ? A little spark of affection, enkindled amidst an ocean of ignorance and folly. The love of Christ ? what is it at the least ? A fathomless abyss — a love immeasurable and boundless as eternity. Now which, is it reasonable to suppose, will comfort us the most to contemplate, *our* love or *his* ? Which carries along with it the brightest and most irresistible evidence of a disinterested affection ? some deed of kindness which we may do to a fellow-man or the death of Christ for the redemption of a ruined world ? Which should we, then, regard with most habitual constancy ? which should our thoughts revert to with the greatest frequency ? — “ Behold, says God, my servant whom I uphold ; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. ” Let us obey this commandment. Surely if the mind of infinite Deity can rest so complacently in the Beloved Son, well may we delight ourselves in him. And whilst we thus behold our kind and beneficent Redeemer, we shall be led to love him. The Spirit, which testifies of him, will “ shed abroad his love in our hearts ; ” and without our being anxiously solicitous about it, “ the love of Christ (whether in this expression his love to us or our’s to him, be meant) will constrain us ; and we shall thus judge,

that if one died for all, then were all dead : And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again."

Finally, *Would we descend ourselves into the grave resignedly?* Let us stand by *the cross of Jesus*. The birth at Bethlehem ; the flight to Egypt ; the sojourn in Nazareth of Galilee ; the repeated visits to Jerusalem ; Gethsemane ; Calvary ; Joseph's tomb, and then the "right hand of the Majesty on high," were but successive steps to the glorification of the Son of Man. Fair and beautiful soever as the Christian's garden may be, there is in every one's garden a "sepulchre." This lies between the cross of suffering and the crown of joy. It is only, however, a step into seclusion and privacy, ere we emerge to shine "as the stars" in the morning of that bright day whose sun shall go down no more. "Unto you that fear my Name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall, and ye shall tread down the wicked (as well-fed bullocks were accustomed to tread the clay for brick) ; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts." Mortality, corruptibility, and every foe shall fall beneath the victorious tread of the resurrection-saint. It was so with our Lord : He ascended to the heavens of glory, leading captivity itself captive. He will yet again appear "the Lord mighty in battle," and then shall the crown which he purchased by his cross be conferred upon all his tried and faithful followers. Thus, if we go down into Hades from mount Calvary, we need entertain no distressing fear : "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the *death* of his saints." He will watch their slumbering remains ; reorganize their mortal bodies ; and clothe them with a

glory and a beauty like his own. See, then, how we may resignedly yield our spirit up, and view through the grave and gate of death a land of immortal purity and bliss.

And now, Beloved, if we would have our sins forgiven ; if we would have our iniquity subdued ; if we would preserve serenity and peacefulness of spirit ; if we would be crucified unto the world ; if we would take up our daily cross with cheerfulness ; if we would truly love the Lord and Saviour of our souls ; and if we would descend ourselves into the grave resignedly—let us stand by the cross of our Redeemer ; gather all these lessons of grace from his dear bleeding wounds, and thence anticipate our full and everlasting triumph in his approaching reign and kingdom. Our garden shall then contain no sepulchre, and the apparent ignominy of the cross shall add eternal brilliancy to our blood-bought crown.

Thou Saviour of the body, the Church, bless, sanctify, and preserve every member through the truth : Grant that each in every age and station may enjoy the powerful and sanctifying merits of thy holy humanity ; and make us chaste before thee in soul and body.

SERMON XX.

DIVINE CHASTISEMENT CONDUCTIVE TO HAPPINESS.

JOB V. 17, 18.

Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth : therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. For he maketh sore and bindeth up ; he woundeth, and his hands make whole.

How multiform and unexpected are the incidents of human life ! How really are we “strangers and sojourners upon Earth !” how subject to vicissitude ! how exposed to danger ! how liable to sickness, to painfulness, and to weariness ! Now, it may be, the Sunshine of happiness beams brightly on us ; our way is pleasant and our prospect fair : anon the sky of our prosperity gathers blackness ; thick and lowering clouds compass us about ; our hands hang down ; our knees wax feeble, and privation, suffering, and death, mark the way we go. Thus corrected, chastened, wounded, and made sore, have we often been. Again, however, we are permitted to “rejoice from our sorrow.” The renewed visitations of God’s mercy and truth cheer and animate our sorrowing and afflicted hearts. It is then we can say to you

in the words of Eliphaz, the Temanite, “ Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth : therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty. For he maketh sore and bindeth up, he woundeth and his hands make whole.”

I purpose to enquire

I. When the correction of the Almighty conduces to our happiness :

And II. Why, consequently, it should not be despised.

I am to enquire

I. *When the correction of the Almighty conduces to our happiness.*

“ Behold, *happy is the man whom God correcteth !*” We are wayward sinful creatures. Correction we continually need. Our Almighty God and Father is at no loss for ways and means to chasten us, when there is a “ needs-be ” for it. The accidents, the pains, the diseases, to which we are all liable, are very various. Both our minds and bodies are exposed to them ; and at God’s bidding every faculty of the soul, and every organ of the body, may become an instrument of chastisement to us : And this chastisement, sanctified by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, becomes a means of happiness when

It induces thoughtfulness. It is surprising how little we think ; I mean, how little we think seriously and earnestly. Of our temporal well-being—what we shall eat, what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed, we can think very readily : but, of our souls ; of God ; of spiritual subjects ; and eternal things, how

hardly can we think at all ! Now, when the correction of the Almighty is upon us, it leads us to say, “ Wherefore hath the Lord done thus ?”^a and to pray, “ Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.”^b Hence thoughtfulness deepens and increases : and when our minds are most sober, when our recollections are most solemn, we shall feel the happiest, and be then the least unwilling for our “ *every* thought to be brought into subjection unto Jesus Christ.”

Correction conduces to our happiness also when *it reminds us of our frailty*. We forget how very frail we are—forget how soon the silver cord may be loosened, the eyes grow dim, the cheeks colourless, the limbs enervated, the heart’s pulsation altogether cease, and the whole frame of our clay tabernacle be levelled with its parent dust. Now, “ God knoweth our frame ; he *remembereth* that we are dust :” to remind us of the same humiliating truth, he wounds and makes us sore. “ O,” says our merciful God, “ O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end !”^c And the consideration of our latter end, and of the glory that is eventually to spring from the dust and tomb of death, avails much to moderate our attachment to a world the fashion of which passeth away, and from which we ourselves are hastening. We shall feel most happy when we feel most sensible of our Nature’s frailty, and most filled with the hope of immortality—dead to the world and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But correction further promotes our happiness when *it induces more earnest prayer*. Though we may “ love the Lord because he hath heard our voice and our supplication,” and though it may be our supreme felicity

^a Deut. xxix. 24.

^b Job x. 2.

^c Deut. xxxii. 29.

to meditate upon God and to commune with him, yet is it no easy matter to keep alive the power of religion in the soul. Nothing but habitual watchfulness and prayer—nothing but habitual communion with God by faith in Christ, will do it. To this we are naturally averse, and this natural aversion doth remain even in them that are regenerate.^a Few of us, I believe, there are who know not, by painful experience, how cold and formal, how negligent and careless, we can become in prayer. Sometimes, like David, we say in our hearts, “My mountain standeth strong; I shall never be moved:” To correct this false security, God “hideth his face, and we are troubled.” And happy is it when our trouble leads us to greater and more importunate earnestness in prayer. Even if wave follow wave, and “*all* God’s billows and storms pass over our souls,” still blessed are we if with our increasing sorrow, we pray, as our Lord and Saviour did, “more fervently.” The cry of “the poor destitute”—the sigh of the contrite spirit is as music in Jehovah’s ear. He only wounds that he may heal, and corrects us that his Name may be glorified by our return to him with weeping and with supplication. When he leads us into the wilderness, it is to speak comfortably to us there, and to give us vineyards and olive-yards from thence.

God’s correction, moreover, conduces to our happiness when *it raises our minds above sublunary things*. The soul, chastened and corrected here, will affect the rest which remains for her hereafter. We view beyond the tearful vale in which we sojourn, a state where nothing that defileth entereth, and where, consequently, all will be pure unmingled blessedness. But who of all that are “taught of God” is not occasionally con-

^a Gal. v. 17.

strained to adopt the Psalmist's language—"My soul cleaveth unto the dust," and mournfully to cry—"Quicken thou me according unto thy word?" In order to excite our diligence and watchfulness, God correcteth us, and it is his "loving correction" that "shall make us great." We learn thereby to "walk by faith." The realities of an eternal scene being more clearly perceived, the occurrences and pursuits of this world become, comparatively, trivial and unimportant. 'In heart and mind, we thither ascend whither our Saviour Christ is gone before us.' In such a frame we can set to our seal that—"Happy is the man whom God correcteth," and that "it is better to be of a lowly spirit with the humble, than to divide the spoil with the proud."

But, lastly, His correction promotes our happiness, when *it endears to us the Lord Jesus Christ*. There is no pain, no loss, no trial, whereby God corrects us, but tells us we are sinners. Our suffering is the fruit of our sin; and when our sin, in the universality of its extent and the depth of its malignity, is discovered to us, O how all-precious and all-desirable does Jesus Christ become! As in the deluge the ark was the only Refuge from the watery ruin, so when the storms of God's displeasure pass over us, Christ is the only Saviour in whom we may "dwell safely from the fear of evil." And dear soever as might be the Ark to Noah and his family, Jesus is infinitely dearer to the humbled, sorrowing, and believing sinner. "God," we read, "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" for its redemption: And never, perhaps, do we so fully and so gratefully appreciate this gift as when we are racked with pain, worn with disease, and when, standing on the verge of time, we are about, expectantly, to launch away into the eternal world. *Then* INDEED it

is happiness to feel the Saviour near—*then* INDEED does his preciousness rise in our estimation—and *then* INDEED the hope of being ever with the Lord, to adore his excellency, to enjoy his love, and to bear his likeness becomes inestimably blessed.

Where, then, the correction of the Almighty *induces thoughtfulness ; reminds us of our frailty ; leads us to more earnest prayer ; raises our minds above sublunary things ; and endears to us the Lord Jesus Christ ;* it certainly becomes a matter of thankfulness not to be “ *without chastisement :*” and where these consequences, in any measure, result from “the chastening of the Lord,” there surely we may say with Eliphaz, “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth !”

Proceed we now to enquire

II. *Why, consequently, it should not be despised.*

It might almost suffice to say, Because it is so manifestly conducive to our happiness. But we observe further, The chastening of the Lord should not be despised.

(1.) *Because it is the correction of a tender Father.* “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth,”—and that—“*even as a Father the son in whom he delighteth.*” A beautiful instance of this fatherly rebuke is afforded to us in the character of Ephraim. “Is Ephraim my dear son ? is he a pleasant child ? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still ; therefore my bowels are troubled for him ; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.”^a A loving Father does not “*willingly*

^a Jer. xxxi. 18—20.

afflict" a child, or cause him *needless* grief: He is necessitated to do so by the child's untowardness, and even while he corrects him, "bowels of compassion" yearn most tenderly towards him. "In wrath God remembers mercy." Judgment is his "strange work;" while mercy is his "delight." Are we, then, 'in sorrow, need, pain, sickness, or any other adversity?' Let us not despise the chastening of the Lord. The Father of our spirits only chastens us "for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness," and by necessary consequence, of his happiness.^a Amidst our severest sufferings God is our Father still: and to his dear and adopted children he will ever be "the Father of mercies" and "the God of all comfort."

But let none despise the chastening of the Lord,

(2.) Because, though almighty to kill and to destroy, *God is yet almighty to save and to deliver.* He may (and we for our evil deeds do most worthily deserve the chastisement) withdraw his gracious presence, take from us all sensible comfort, and "make as though he heard us not:" but at the same time, let us remember, "his arm is not shortened that it cannot save, nor is his ear heavy that it cannot hear." A Father may "make *as though* he heard not" the cry of a corrected child: nevertheless, the cry of a broken and a contrite heart will move and interest him. And while God is "able to save unto the uttermost," need his troubled children to despair of help and deliverance? Witness Lot in Sodom: witness Isaac when virtually offered in sacrifice: Jacob when met by Esau: Israel in Egypt, and during their forty years sojourn in the wilderness: David when pursued by the infuriated Saul: Peter when imprisoned at Jerusalem, and expecting his exe-

^a Heb. xii. 9, 10.

cution on the morrow : Paul at Thessalonica, and innumerable others whose names are in the Book of the Lord's remembrance. Often is 'man's extremity God's opportunity,' and by ways and means peculiarly his own, does the Lord God of Israel fight for Israel. And however seemingly against us events may be, we shall certainly prove that saying true, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."^a Then, wherefore should our heart fail us under the chastening of the Almighty? Why should we value at so low a rate the Lord's correcting mercy?

Another reason why it should not be despised, is

(3.) *Because God designs our spiritual good thereby.* This was the end or design of the Lord in all the afflictions of his servant Job. Severe as the patriarch's trials were, yet "the Lord was very pitiful and of tender mercy,"^b and never, perhaps, had Job said, "*I know that my Redeemer liveth,*" had he not been so severely disciplined and afflicted. In like manner, the Lord woundeth us, and maketh us sore, purposely for the fuller and more glorious manifestation of his own power and goodness, *first* in the humiliation, and *then* in the salvation of our souls. He perfects or magnifies his strength in our weakness. He empties us of self-love and carnal complacency, to fill us with his grace and Spirit. He tries our faith to prove its preciousness. What, then, "though it be tried with fire," yet if it be "found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," shall we dread the "fire" that refines and purifies it?^c God discovers to us our spiritual poverty, that we may desire and value the durable riches and righteousness of his kingdom. He gives us to feel "a

^a Rom. viii. 28.

^b James v. 11.

^c 1 Pet. i. 7.

sentence of death in ourselves," that we may the more willingly and gratefully accept "the eternal life which he hath given us in his Son." He embitters or removes our temporal supports for the furtherance of our spiritual interests ; and hence appears the excellence of the wise man's counsel—"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him."

Again, it should not be despised

(4.) *Because Christ our Redeemer went before us to glory through sufferings.* Him do we "esteem stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted:" and can we expect to pass through life without fellowship with our Lord in humiliation and trial? Is it *not* well for the Disciples to be as their Master? Yes, truly: and, accordingly, we are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son,"^a and "*it is given us* (GIVEN us, as a peculiarly gracious and distinguishing privilege) *not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.*"^b Nothing should be undervalued that tends to make us like Jesus Christ. Our tribulation may be "much," but if through it we enter the kingdom, a moment in glory will far outweigh even a life of trouble here. "Many sons" will the Almighty Father bring with "the Captain of their salvation to glory *through sufferings.*" Let not, then, those sufferings be deemed hurtful or unnecessary which liken us to the Lord our Leader and Commander. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him."

A final reason we shall name why the chastening of the Lord should not be despised, is

(5.) *Because it tends to meeten us instrumentally for heaven.* While the cross and passion, the atonement and worthiness of the Lamb, form the alone meritorious

^a Rom. viii. 29.

^b Phil. i. 29.

ground of our justification, acceptance, and peace ; yet do we need a meetness for “ the inheritance of the saints in Light.” There must be a preparedness of mind for its society, its converse, and its employments. This is no where so readily acquired as in the school of affliction. In this school the Spirit teaches : and suffering is that “ rod of correction” whereby he drives foolishness from our hearts. When do we feel so fully weaned from things terrestrial,—when so simply dependent on a Saviour,—when so entirely satisfied with a Saviour’s treasured and inexhaustible fulness,—and when so earnestly desirous of another, that is, a heavenly country, as when we are placed in circumstances of sorrow and distress?—Look, at your leisure, into 2 Cor. iv. 15—18, and 1 Pet. i. 6, 7, and Rev. vii. 9—17. You will hence see that “ all these things are for your sakes,” namely, for “ the trial of your faith,” for “ the perfecting of your hope,” for “ the furtherance of your joy,” for the “ separation of the precious from the vile” within you, and, consequently, your preparation for the coming and kingdom of Jesus Christ. I have heard of one who endured the severest pains with meekness, and while looking unto Jesus for “ mercy unto eternal life,” observed, ‘ Every pang I feel does but increase my weight of glory : let me, then, suffer on, nor dare to contemn the chastening of the Lord.’

I have now enquired, When the correction of the Almighty conduces to our happiness ; and Why, consequently it should not be despised. I can only further

ADDRESS

(1.) Those of you who may hitherto have disregarded the Lord’s correcting love.

It is, alas ! no happiness to you to have been corrected. God hath once, yea twice, and, it may be, oftener, laid his chastening hand upon you : in *body*

you have been diseased and pained ; in *mind* you have been distressed and alarmed : but, so far from being the happier for it, you are, perhaps, only the more careless and indifferent. It is now a light thing with you to make promises of amendment, and to forget them. The day of your visitation passes away, and together with it all that was felt and promised. But, O remember, God's Spirit will not *always* strive with man. There is a possibility of becoming "past feeling," and of being "given over to a reprobate mind." Consider, then, your ways. Recollect the purposes of your heart as you have lain upon beds of sickness, and when a day of gloominess and sorrow hath passed over you. I cannot wish you a greater good than that you may feel wounded in spirit for your sins, and burdened in conscience with a sense of your guiltiness. Whatever pains you may feel, it will be better for you to be afflicted now, than for you to hear hereafter that fearful word addressed to you,—"*Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish !*" If you perish, you will wonder indeed at the folly of despising and neglecting the chastisements of the Almighty. May grace be given you truly to repent and unfeignedly to believe his holy Gospel ! So shall you prove by personal experience the happiness of the man whom God correcteth, and say with the Psalmist, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray ; but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted ; that I might learn thy statutes. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes ; that I be not ashamed."

I address (2.) Those of you who may be in trouble.

Whatever your trouble may be, "despise" it not. Do not murmur against the dispensations of the Almighty. Think that 'behind a frowning Providence, he hides a smiling face.' God loves you and therefore chastens you. It is your *own* infirmity if you think his

mercy can come to an end or his promise fail. Remember the sorrows of Gethsemane, and be thankful that *your* trouble is not the punishment of sin ; that *that* was endured for you by your suffering Surety, and that now there can be no affliction which the Believer in Jesus should not deem “light and momentary.” It is to conduce to your happiness, that ye are wounded, corrected, and made sore. You are bidden to “behold” that it is even so. Then “be not faithless, but believing.” The Lord Jesus told his disciples, that in the world they should have tribulation. At the same time, he bade them be of good cheer, because he had overcome the world. “Ye now therefore have sorrow :” but the “little while” of Christ’s absence is rapidly expiring, and presently will the promise be fulfilled, “Your sorrow shall be turned into joy.” So abundant, so glorious will be the consolation of the Church upon the Redeemer’s return, that your previous trouble shall be absorbed and lost even to recollection. “A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come : but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she *remembereth no more* the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore (or *in like manner* ; compare John xvi. 21, 22, with Romans viii. 17—23.) have sorrow : but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” Listen to these gracious words, Beloved. Take the comfort they are intended to impart ; and look forward to the day when the throes of a fallen universe shall issue in a glorious deliverance. Meanwhile, let your Bible ; let the Mercy-seat ; let the Sabbath, be dear to you : then as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolations also will abound by Christ : to whom be power and dominion eternally. Amen.

SERMON XXI.

MINISTERIAL INQUIRY INTO THE WELFARE OF A PEOPLE.

2 KINGS IV. 26.

Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well.

FOR the particular occasion of these words, I must refer you to their preceding context. You will find that an honourable Woman residing at Shunem, a city in the Tribe of Issachar, kindly entertained from day to day, the Prophet Elisha. “What is to be done for thee?” said Elisha, willing, by some means or other, to recompense her hospitality. She cared not to be spoken of to the King or to the Captain of his host: “I dwell, she said, among my own people,” and she was contented to remain retired and obscure among them. Gehazi, however, Elisha’s servant, answered, saying, “Verily she hath no child.” Elisha then prophetically declared that by that time next year she should embrace a Son. A Son was born to her. With many tender and

anxious feelings we may easily suppose this pious mother nursed her infant boy. Doubtless she watched over him with the utmost maternal fondness, and anticipated with earnest desire and hope the unfoldings of reason, the maturity of years, and the obedience of filial love, in her darling child. But—O, how invariably is tribulation the path-way to glory!—this Shunammite's Son dies; his soul is required of him, and that, ere he passes the bounds of playful boyhood. His Mother, in the recollection of the Prophet and the Prophet's promise, carries his now lifeless corpse to where the Man of God was wont to rest, and laid it upon his bed. She then went out to go to Elisha. Meeting with her husband, he dissuaded her, alleging as a reason that it was "neither New moon nor Sabbath." And she said, "It shall be well." So she came to where she might probably find the Man of God, and Elisha seeing her afar off said to Gehazi, "Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she said, It is well."

Such, briefly, was the *occasion* of our text. Now, without particularly adverting to the case of this pious woman or to the history of that holy man who found a lodging in her house, I will accommodate the Prophet's enquiry to my purpose, and endeavour, ministerially, to ascertain your spiritual character and state. We trust we can, with a measure of St. Paul's earnest and affectionate solicitude, appeal to the great Searcher of hearts, and say, "God is my witness, and ye also, how earnestly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." Suffer me, then, to ask, "Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?" And may it be your's, my people, feelingly and truly to reply, "It is well!"

There are two questions which may very properly head our present Discourse : FIRST ; *When may it be said to be really well with any persons ?* and SECONDLY ; *Whether it be thus well with you ?*

Let us enquire

FIRST, *When may it be said to be really well with any persons ?*

Many would think it to be well with us when we have food and raiment, when our flocks and herds increase, when our hills and vales stand thick with corn ; when health flows through our veins and mantles on our cheeks ; when our habitations are the abodes of quietness and comfort, and when the neighbourhood in which we dwell is social, kind, and friendly : but, if *this* is to be well, and we are *no better* than “ this World’s good ” can make us, we are well only for time, and as it respects our frail and perishable bodies. In this sense, it was well with Dives. Dives was a rich man : he was clad with purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day : but amidst all this seeming sufficiency, he was really wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. What was his joy ? Where were the riches of his soul ? Did he “ hunger and thirst after righteousness ? ” Was he clad in ‘ the marriage garment required by God in holy Scripture ? ’ Did he see any thing that was amiable and lovely in Religion ? Was he equal—we say not in worldly wealth, wisdom, and honour ; but—in excellence of character, in sterling piety, in exalted hope, with the scorned and neglected beggar who lay at his lordly gates ?—As it respected the body, it seemed to be well with the rich man ; but how fared it with the imperishable soul ? Temporally it

seemed to be well with him ; but was it well with him in Eternity ?

For it to be *really* well with us, therefore, we must come to things which concern the soul, and which have a reference to that Eternal State whither we are going.

Have what we will without God, without Christ, without his gracious Spirit, and a hope inspired by him, of immortal glory after death, we have nothing really worth possessing : Whereas, *want* what we will, with God, with Christ, and with that hope the Holy Ghost inspires, we have all that can make us really happy in time and for ever. And thus it may be—as *well*, shall I say ? yea, rather *infinitely better* with a poor pious man in a cottage, than it is with a rich ungodly man in a palace. So “faithful and worthy of all acceptation is the saying, that *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*”

Mark, then, what follows : It is well with us *if our souls have been awakened ;—if we have found forgiveness ;—if the Lord Jesus Christ be precious to us ;—and if we be now walking in newness and righteousness of life.*

By nature we are all “dead in trespasses and sin.” Our Church acknowledges mankind to be totally destitute of spiritual health, and in the Burial Service leads her members to pray to be ‘raised from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness.’ In this state the Gospel finds us. Speaking in his Word, God says, “It is high time to awake out of sleep :” “Awake, therefore, thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” This voice quickeneth whom God pleaseth ; light is communicated ; darkness passes away, and the soul is awakened from its slumbers in ignorance and sin. Roused from our former apathy

and carelessness, we begin to see that however well we once thought it with us, it is well no longer. Our fancied security was danger; our imagined life was death. We were walking on the brink of a fathomless abyss. Amidst all our professions of Christianity, we perceived not the loveliness of its Founder, we enjoyed nothing of its humbling yet ennobling Spirit. Our morals, however specious, were all unsound: they wanted "the unction of the Holy One" to give them vitality and worth; and we doubt not now but they were sinful before God. Our crimes which we thought to be few and venial, we find to be numberless and heinous. Hell from beneath seems moved to meet us at our coming; and in the anguish of our heart we cry with the affrighted Jailer—"What must I do to be saved?" Our souls being thus awakened, and made sensible of their guiltiness and danger, we shall be led earnestly to desire forgiveness. Now, it is well with us *if we have found forgiveness*. Assuredly, forgiveness of sin *may be found*. "Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more," is the recorded promise of a gracious God: and, "We *have* redemption through the Saviour's blood, even *the forgiveness of Sins*," is the unhesitating declaration of St. Paul. 'The forgiveness of sins' forms, too, an Article of our Creed; though alas! few, we fear, of the many who profess to believe in it, really enjoy any consciousness of God's forgiving love. It is the privilege only of the Believer to do so, and it is well with us if we can look up to the eternal God as to our *reconciled* Father in Christ. The rebellion of a child is forgotten by the Father in the overflowing abundance of the Father's love: but the children of God themselves will "remember and forget not how they provoked the Lord." Indeed, they are bidden to "remember their provocations:" and, "My soul," will

they individually say, "hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me:" but notwithstanding this, while they are humbled in the remembrance of their sins, they will rejoice in the mercy that spares and forgives them. And if we have obtained mercy, the Medium of mercy will be precious to us; and then *if the Lord Jesus Christ be precious to us*, it is well with us—really and truly well. He comes to the penitent and sorrowing sinner, and brings with him spiritual health and cure. He binds up the broken heart; pours into its wounds the wine and oil of comfort; heals its every care; renews its every thought; and makes it an habitation of God through the Spirit. He draws the affections and desires of the soul heavenward. He enriches his people with "durable riches and righteousness." He calls them "Brethren" and "Friends." He becomes himself their joy in sorrow, their strength in weakness, and their life in death. "To them that believe, he is precious:" and it must necessarily be well with all who experience the worth of his love and mediation. True; they may have troubles to endure, and crosses to sustain; but amidst and under them, it is still well with them. Jesus is with his Disciples in the ship, and though he may suffer the winds and waves to be tempestuous, yet can he, when he pleases, speak the storm into a calm, and bring his followers to "the haven where they would be." And if Christ be precious to us—if we feel our obligations to his love, obedience to him will be sweet and easy. And *if now we be walking in newness and righteousness of life*, it is well with us. Naturally, our conversation is "according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom also we all had our conversation in times past." After the humiliation and justi-

fication of our souls by the Holy Spirit of the Lord, our conversation becomes according to the Gospel. "In simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world." We cannot willingly offend a Friend so dear to us—One whose kindnesses are great and unwearied, and whose pitying mercy hath passed by numberless slights and provocations.

"Talk they of morals? O, thou bleeding Lamb,
Thou Maker of new morals to mankind,
The grand morality is love of Thee."

The "redeemed of the Lord" will delight to do his will. They will "have respect unto *all* God's commandments," and esteem his "commandments concerning *all* things to be right." Every sin will be hated; every virtue will be loved. 'Necessarily,' says our Church, and *necessarily* do we maintain, will 'good works spring out of a true and lively faith.' Holiness is the element of the heaven-born soul; and "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report," will be the things which such an one will invariably and constantly affect, prefer, and value.

If then our souls have been awakened; if we have found forgiveness; if Christ be precious to us; and if we be walking in newness and righteousness of life—if, in short, we be practically acquainted with the Gospel, as the "ministration of righteousness," *it is well*, and *really* well with us.

Suffer me now to enquire

SECONDLY, *Whether it be thus well with you?*

You may, as we have seen, be well as it respects this

world and your abiding in it. Your bodily health may be good, and you may have many years and much enjoyment in apparent prospect before you. Your worldly circumstances too may be prosperous, and you may be adding field to field and house to house—pulling down your barns and building greater, and laying up goods in store for a long while to come. But, is it well with your *souls*? Would it be well with you, do you think, if God were now to require your souls of you? Enquire, I pray you. Have you ever yet been *awakened* from the sleep of spiritual death? Have you ever yet experienced a transition from Nature's gross and palpable darkness into the divine and marvellous light of grace?^a Did the prayer 'Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord,'—ever come with warmth of feeling and earnestness of desire from your heart? Do you feel the daily renewing of the Spirit? Do all ignorant prejudices, all evil passions, and all corrupt affections, die in you; and do all things belonging to the Spirit live and grow in you? Are the eyes of your understanding opened to discern the nature, the evil, and the consequence of sin? See you your danger whilst without God and without his pardoning mercy in the world? If you have been thus awakened, it is well: if not, you cannot to our enquiry, "*Is it well with thee?*" reply in the words of the Shunammite, "*It is well.*"

Again: Felt you ever your need of *mercy*? Has a sensibility of your guiltiness ever constrained you to cry for mercy? Have you, like her who had lost one of her ten pieces of silver, sought for it "till you have found it?" Is your heart "sprinkled from an evil conscience?" Do you daily prove the power of a Saviour's blood to cleanse you from all sin?—People often talk of God's

^a 1 Pet. ii. 9.

mercy, and say—‘The Lord is merciful:’ So he is; but have you tasted the sweetness of his mercy? Rather, do not some of you make the Lord’s mercifulness an excuse for carelessness, and almost a plea for sin? If so, it cannot possibly be well with you. On the contrary, if you have desired and sought and found forgiveness, or (to come down to the lowest movement of our spiritual existence) if you are desiring only and seeking to find forgiveness, it is and shall be well with you. In the language of my gracious Lord I say to you, “Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and the door shall be opened unto you.” ‘Miserable sinners’ ye may be: but ‘the holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, the three Persons and the one God’ of our worship and adoration, will surely have mercy upon you. “I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him.”^a

Further: What do you love most?—Christ or the world?—Christ or sinful pleasure?—Christ or the increase of your temporal wealth and honour?—Christ or yourself? What is your chief joy? The Christian “rejoices in Christ Jesus:” Is he the object of *your* rejoicing? Enquire: for the object in which any one finds most satisfaction and pleasure, will commonly discover that person’s real taste, disposition, and character. Know ye, then, any thing of “joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ?” See ye the Saviour’s suitability to your necessity? Feel ye his *preciousness*? Which would you accept if I could offer you in the one hand a million of silver or gold, and in the other Christ and his righteousness? Which could you lose most readily, your earthly all or your interest in the Son of God? Whilst his people are “a crown of glory and a royal diadem” to him, he is “for a crown of glory and for a

^a Ecc. viii. 12.

diadem of beauty" unto them :^a *He* is admired in them, and *they* are saved in him. "The Lord's delight is in them that fear him ;" and them that fear him delight in the Lord. "The joy of the Lord is their strength :"^b and when his countenance shines brightly upon them, it affords a more abundant and sublimer gladness to their hearts than any increase of corn and wine and oil could do.^c Does your experience confirm our testimony ? If it do, it is well with you : if it do not, and you see "no form or comeliness in Jesus Christ, that you should desire him," you cannot to our enquiry answer, "*It is well.*"

Lastly : In what way are you *living* ? The way in which we live will most clearly evidence whether we have been awakened, forgiven, and "accepted in the Beloved," or not ; and, consequently, whether it be well with us or not. Now, enquire : Is your conversation "*a good conversation in Christ* ?" Is the Lord's Day a delight to you ? Is his Word pleasant to your taste, yea, "sweeter than honey or the droppings of the honey-comb ?" Is prayer your daily and continual practice ? A true Christian, we believe, cannot live without prayer : Can *you* ? Is it with you a privilege to approach 'the throne of the heavenly grace,' and to pour out your hearts before Him that sits thereon ? With humble boldness do you supplicate salvation there ? Does your life accord with your prayers ?—This it is that manifests a new and altered state of mind. If there be a change wrought by the Spirit of God within, there will soon be a change perceptible without. "The tree will be known by its fruits :"^a "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles ?" Are honesty, sobriety, temperance, meekness, brotherly kindness, yea, all the fruits of a new and gracious Nature, apparent in you ?

^a Isa. xxviii. 5. lxii. 3.

^b Neh. viii. 10.

^c Ps. iv. 6—7.

If they be, then are ye “trees of righteousness,” and it is well with you. May ye be more and more fruitful in the ways of holiness! “Herein, our Lord says, is my Father glorified, if ye bear much fruit:” May you, under the Spirit’s quickening and hallowing influences, carefully avoid every thought, every word, every deed, that would dishonour the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and may ye be solicitous unweariedly to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called! And O that those of you to whom it must conclusively appear that it is *not* well, may be stirred up to cry, “Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved!” Then will the Lord become your “praise and your confidence,” and whatever may be your earthly circumstances, you will look Heavenward and say, “*It is well.*”

I have now asked, When it may be said to be really well with any persons, and Whether it be thus well with you. And I shall close by COMMENDING the piety of the Shunammite Woman to your notice and imitation.

1. “It is well!” said this honourable woman in reply to the enquiry, “Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?” What sweet submission to the will of God does this answer disclose! She had lost her son, and that son her only child: Her heart was wrung with grief (and what heart but feels acutely when filial and parental ties are severed?) She had yet to announce her infant’s death to its fond Father, and before her lay a childless cheerless remnant of human life: and yet she says, “It is well.” Hence you may learn that piety consists in *suffering* no less than in *doing* the will of God. To suffer the will of God, however, is more difficult than to do it: consequently, the resignation of our will to the Divine will in sorrowful and afflictive circumstances, indicates higher

attainment in pious and devout affection, than active and pleasant obedience does. To this advance in piety should you aspire. It is well when, like St. Paul, we can take pleasure—not only in easy and cheering circumstances, but—in weaknesses, necessities, and distresses for Christ's sake, knowing that the confidence of our hearts in sorrow will exalt and honour him more than when mercy beams with uninterrupted brightness upon us.

2. This pious woman (as in the commencement of our Discourse we intimated) went to Elisha: She fell with prostrate reverence at his feet: The man of God came with her to her house: “He prayed unto the Lord” to reanimate the now lifeless body of the Shunammite's son: His prayer was heard; and the delighted mother again embraced her beloved child. All was well: and she knew that amidst the darkest dispensations of his Providence, God was still the God of truth and love unto those who feared and served him. Then “Who is among *you* that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let *him* trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon his God.” “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the Covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” Dare to believe that “*all* things shall work together,” though you see not how or by what means they shall do so, for your good. Mysterioriously as he sometimes works, you shall eventually say, “The Lord hath done all things well.” Distressing as was the death of the Shunammite's son, yet He that smote him had thoughts of love towards both the mother and the child. God's design was gracious, though the means of its accomplishment were painful. Be then the Psalmist's determination your's, “I will bless the Lord

at *all* times ; his praise shall *continually* be in my mouth." Say to every one who would discourage your believing confidence in God, "*It shall be well.*" While man '*never is but always to be blessed,*' hope must remain in vigorous exercise. What a man already seeth, he cannot hope for : if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. And what, amidst your present trials and privations, should you be waiting for ? Look and see Romans viii. 18—23, and when God's whole creation shall be thus gloriously redeemed, your hope shall turn to glad fruition, and then while standing in the felt possession of all God's faithful promises, with rapturous thankfulness will you exclaim, "*It is well ! all is well, and shall be well for ever !*"

3. With herself, her husband, and her child, the Shunammite said it was well. Beautiful instance of Family Piety this ! See here, ye mothers, ye fathers, ye children, how with one heart and one mind ye should serve and glorify the Lord. How many a parent has been bereaved of an infant child ! "*Vexed in spirit*" may its dear mother be : but, is it not well with him ? Would you bring his young immortal and now happy spirit back to our world of suffering again ? O, no : God might permit the return of the Shunammite's son for the confirmation of her faith, and the increase of her piety and devotion : but, in the light and consolation of a more full and perfect Dispensation, it should be our's resignedly to say, "*I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.*" Pray ye to be made "*as a little child*" yourselves, and then shall we together enter the Redeemer's sinless deathless kingdom. Be it the endeavour of every wife and of every husband among you to fulfil each one severally, and both harmoniously, their respective duties. Seek that it may be really well with both yourselves and your children. As the Shunammite in her sorrow went to

Elisha for spiritual consolation and instruction, so do you make your Minister your friend. Whilst “we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord,” we yet avow ourselves “*your servants for Jesus’ sake.*” Let us thus be agreed to imitate the virtues of God’s dear people, and be ready under all the various calamities incident to our mortal being, with meekness and lowliness of heart, to say to one another, “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.” “Bear ye one another’s burden, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” It is indeed beautiful and pleasant to see brethren dwelling in unity together; each interested in all, and all contributing to the happiness of each. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it. Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, (with deference and respect,) in singleness of heart, as unto Christ.” Happy the households thus influenced and regulated by love! Such a scene must surely be preliminary to the congregated family of God in the world of unmingled blessedness. In such circumstances, trials are mercies of a nobler kind, and all must ultimately be “well.” May the Lord, agreeably to his word in Isa. xliv. 3, pour his Spirit upon your seed, and his blessing upon your offspring, and enable you, to the praise of his glory, from one generation to another, to say, “It is well! It is well!”

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus.

SERMON XXII.

CAUSES AND CURE OF RELIGIOUS DECLENSION.

PSALM LXXXV. 6.

*Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy People may
rejoice in thee ?*

A KNOWLEDGE of the times and circumstances in which many of the Psalms were written, is of great importance ; of so great importance indeed, that they cannot, we are sure, be rightly understood without it. It is thus with reference to the 85th Psalm, and to the verse especially which we have selected for our text.

You well know that God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, and led him to sojourn in a land which he should afterwards possess for an inheritance. To Abraham, Isaac was born : to Isaac was born Jacob : Jacob had twelve sons, and these, from being the founders of the twelve Tribes of Israel, are usually termed the twelve Patriarchs : the Patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph, their brother, into Egypt : this circumstance eventually brought Jacob and all his family thither. Thence, after a period of four hundred

and thirty years, did the Lord bring out their descendants by the ministry of Moses and Aaron. With a high hand and a stretched-out arm He led them through the depths of the Sea, and brought them ultimately into the Promised Land. There they lived a prosperous and peculiar people through several successive ages. They declined, however, in purity of principle and integrity of heart, and fell, consequently, into grossly sinful and idolatrous practices. Their Scribes and Teachers became proud, envious, factious, and malicious men. The glory of their professed religion was superseded by earthly-mindedness and formality. "Other lords," rather than the God of their fathers, had dominion over them. To correct their propensity to backslide from him, God suffered their Land to be invaded, their city, Jerusalem, to be taken, and their beautiful temple to be destroyed. Multitudes were carried captive to Babylon. They continued in captivity seventy years, till cured, at length, of their proneness to apostacy, God raised up for them a Deliverer. Under the conduct of Ezra and Nehemiah, many of them returned to Canaan. In Ezra i. 2—4, you will find the Proclamation of Cyrus permitting their return, with directions and authority to rebuild their once-famed city and temple. Now, it was *after* the publication of this decree, and *in circumstances* such as we have related, that, we presume, the 85th Psalm was composed. Thus it begins—"O Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land; thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sins." And then it goes on to describe the Author's exulting joy in the pardoning and restoring mercy of Jehovah; and, arguing on the ground of already experienced goodness, he asks, "Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

But, my Brethren, these words are as descriptive of our *spiritual* as they were of the Jews' *temporal* condition. *We* were captives—not indeed to a Babylonish Monarch, but, to “the god of this world,” “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” *We* were strangers—not indeed in the land of Assyria, but, “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the Covenants of Promise.” *We* groaned under a cruel and oppressive bondage—not indeed of a corporeal, but of a spiritual kind. Our hands and our feet were free, but our minds were fettered. And, just as Cyrus issued a decree permitting the Jews to return to Canaan, so has our Saviour-God “proclaimed liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to the bound.” Many of us have professedly “come out of Babylon”—renounced the world, and are on our way to the celestial Canaan, “the Jerusalem that is above.” It may be also, we are “weary because of the greatness of the way,” and we consequently find it in our hearts to say, “*Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?*”

In further opening and discussing our subject, I shall put my remarks under the two following heads :

- I. The Causes of Religious Declension ;
- And II. The Means of Spiritual Revival.

We notice

- I. *The CAUSES of Religious Declension :—*

That Religion does, both in Churches and Individuals, oftentimes, decline, is, I conceive, evident both from *Scripture* and from *Experience*. The *Scripture* speaks of some persons who “did run well,” but were hindered,

so that they did not “go on to obey the truth.”^a It speaks, too, of a man dispossessed of the devil, and describes him as a house that is “empty, swept, and garnished;” but the powers of darkness repossess their empire over him, and “the last state of that man is worse than the first.”^b We read again of some who “through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, escape the pollutions that are in the world,” and are yet “*again* entangled therein and overcome.”^c Of the Ephesian Converts we read, “they had left their first love;” and of the Laodiceans, they were become lukewarm, “neither cold nor hot.”^d—*Experience* also evidences the same sad decline in Religion. Religious professors commonly do complain of this. That warmth of feeling, that ardour of desire, that buoyancy of hope, that sweet and delightful consciousness of the Divine favour, which usually marks the earlier stages of real and spiritual piety, decays. Our affections languish, our expectations cool, our views grow dim, and often in the language of Job do we sigh, “O that I were as in months passed, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon me, and when by his light I walked through darkness!”^e Indeed some do so far decline in religion, as almost to wish they had made no profession of it. Now, whence is this? What are the *Causes* of this Religious Declension? Usually, we believe, they will be found the following:

(1.) *Remissness in secret duty.* It has been justly observed, that Religious Declension may almost invariably be dated from the Closet. Persons may be interrupted and hindered in secret duty, but this widely differs from a willing and unregretted omission of it.

^a Gal. v. 7.

^b Matt. xii. 44.

^c 2 Pet. ii. 20.

^d Rev. ii. 4, and iii. 6.

^e Job xxix. 2, 3, &c.

The religion of the heart must necessarily languish, when the heart ceases to commune with itself and with its God in secrecy and retirement. Prayer in the Church, in the Family, or in the Social Circle, does not do away with the necessity of Prayer *alone* with God. Hasty, thoughtless, careless, private devotion, will, upon enquiry, be found greatly detrimental to the interests of the soul.

(2.) *Inattention to God's Word.* God's Word is the food of our spiritual existence : inattention to it, therefore, must greatly retard the soul's experience and enjoyment of Divine things. We say not that poor uneducated people could read and understand every thing the Bible says ; few or none, however learned, can do this : but when that which was once "the very joy and rejoicing of our heart," becomes insipid or tasteless to us, our religion must necessarily decline. It is a sure sign of ill health when we nauseate our customary food. The same simple and unadulterated truth must nourish our after progress in the christian life as nourished its beginnings. We must never have done with our Bibles, till all the Bible's verities be wrought into our heart's experience, and we are blessed in the fruition of all its promises. It is in his Word our Shepherd speaks, and inattention to it will make his voice inaudible ; and should his voice be unheard, we shall too probably "stumble upon dark mountains," and wander we know not whither.

(3.) *Neglect of self-examination.* It is impossible but religion will decline unless its increase and perfection be desired and sought. And to insure its increase and perfection, we must often be examining ourselves. Religion in the human heart is as a tender plant in an unkindly soil : unless it be watched, and watched carefully too, it will wither and decay. There is nothing in our

fallen nature congenial to it ; but rather every thing that is opposed to its prevalence and growth. “ The root of the matter,” therefore, must be “ dug about and dressed ;” examined with circumspection and care, and watered with Heavenly influences, if we would “ grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.” When the inquiries, What am I ? How am I ? Where am I ? are neglected, religion will—imperceptibly, it may be, but—surely and really, decline.

(4.) *Allowed indulgence of some favourite sin.* Perhaps all have a sin which more easily besets them, as St. Paul remarks, than others.^a If this particular sin be spared and indulged, it will make prayer powerless, and praise will die upon the lips. It will prove another Achan’s wedge of gold or Babylonish garment in our tent.^b It will prevent our warring a good and a successful warfare. The native evils of our heart will prevail against us, and our piety will become a poor, a spiritless, and a joyless profession. Our Lord’s direction is to “ cut off a right hand and to pluck out a right eye”—to exercise the severest and most painful self-denial, rather than by the retention and indulgence of any favourite sin to “ grieve his Spirit,” and thereby to subject ourselves to exclusion and banishment from his presence and the glory of his power. Often may it most pertinently be said to one whose religion languishes, and whose soul “ mourns sore as a dove,” “ Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way ?”^c

(5.) *Indifference to Public Means.* Some persons pretend to get above and beyond Public and Stated Means : but this is mere spiritual pride and a delusion

^a Heb. xii. 1.

^b See Josh. vii.

^c Jer. ii. 17.

of the Wicked One. In no stage of our Christian Piety are we to “*neglect* the assembling of ourselves together.” We are to “wait for the loving-kindness of the Lord in the midst of his Temple.” We are to “keep holy day with them” that do so, till we exchange mortal for immortal worship. “Faith comes by hearing,” and it is “where two or three are gathered together in his Name” that Jesus Christ has promised his especial presence. Religion has its public as well as its private ordinances; and if a trifling illness, the care of a child, or the provision of a dinner, be allowed frequently to detain us from “the great congregation,” our Religion will soon become formal, cold, and listless. I believe it is from an infrequent or a constrained attendance on Public Means that many religious professors are necessitated so often and so feelingly to cry, “My leanness! My leanness!”^a

(6.) There is one other cause of Religious Declension which we will denominate *Self-complacency*. People become seriously impressed, they apparently repent, reform, and, in the judgment of charity, they are “converted from the error of their ways.” It may be they have sorrowed for their sins, prayed for mercy, and gone just so far in religion as to persuade themselves that they are now in no danger of hell, and pretty sure of heaven. But, alas for them! herein they rest, and at this point they fall into a careless, dark, unprofitable state of mind. If there was ever any real vitality in their Religion, it now droops and dies. To the eye of sense it may still seem fair and beautiful, but it wants one thing—GROWTH, and where *growth* in grace is wanting, there will soon remain a body without a soul,—a form unblessed with the power of godliness. Satan

^a Isa. xxiv. 16.

is a subtle enemy, and pride can assume the guise of humility. Hence, sometimes really spiritually-minded persons need to be cautioned against self-gratulation and self-dependence. O, guard against this feeling if you would be “strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.”

Mark, then, the usual CAUSES of Religious Declension—*Remissness in secret duty—Inattention to God’s Word—Neglect of self-examination—Allowed indulgence of some favourite sin—Indifference to Public Means, and Self-complacency.* And having noticed these, we come to consider

II. *The MEANS of Spiritual Revival:—*

The Means we shall specify are those which the Scriptures alone will warrant. These, we hope, many among you, Beloved, will be pleased to learn: for, much do we need a revival of God’s work amongst us and within us—a “*Season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*” We, perhaps, do not feel all that earnestness in the use of Means,—that “joy and peace in believing,” that pleasure in religious exercises, that delight in God, that sweet and almost impatient “looking for of Christ” and of his coming glory, which we once felt. “We see not our tokens” of spiritual prosperity, and rarely do we hear the enquiry, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” Well, therefore, may we take up the words of Judah and say, “Wilt thou not revive us again?” And we are encouraged to expect a Spiritual Revival, because “yet doth the Lord devise *Means* whereby his banished be not expelled from him.”^a Some of these I now proceed to notice. Would you experience a Spiritual Revival? Then

^a 2 Sam. xiv. 14.

FIRST OF ALL—*Recollect Yourself.* Recollection is a great and valuable means of spiritual good. Our minds, through intercourse with the world, through worldly and even necessary cares, and sometimes, it may be, through an undue and improper indulgence of the bodily senses, become dissipated and thoughtless. We feel weary and oppressed. Our zest for heavenly things and holy employments is weakened. We may indeed, like Gideon's army be pursuing, but it is faintly.^a Now, in such a case *recollection* will avail us much. In Psalm lxxxvi. ver. 11, is a prayer just suited to a weary soul's necessity,—“Unite my heart to fear thy name :”—*unite* my heart ; *gather up* its scattered thoughts ; unite its fallen and bewildered powers, and let me live in the recollection and fear of thy dread Majesty. Pray this prayer, and get your heart thus united and recollected before God, and you shall yet again be revived and feel yourselves “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”

SECONDLY—*Humble yourselves.* “Humble yourselves,” says the Holy Ghost by St. Peter, “under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” Humiliation of soul on account of our backslidings certainly becomes us. “The mighty hand of God” might justly punish our unwatchfulness and negligence : but “He delighteth in mercy,” and “He shall save the humble person.”^b It is well to humble ourselves even with fasting or abstinence from what, in ordinary circumstances, would be allowable gratification. “I humbled my soul, says David, with *fasting* and prayer.”^c And this will be found a powerful means to induce a genuine unaffected sorrow for sin and a tender affectionate seriousness of spirit. God himself

^a Judges viii. 4.

^b Job xxii. 29.

^c Psalm xxxv. 13, with which see also Psalm lxix. 10, and Joel ii. 12.

condescends most graciously to encourage our use of this means, saying, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall *humble themselves*, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin.”^a And with a renewed sense of God’s forgiving and redeeming mercy, there will be new life and love and fervour in his service.

THIRDLY—*Surrender yourselves anew to the Lord.* “Give me thy heart,” is the Lord’s reasonable demand: and I do not believe that while there is any reservation of the heart for self or the world, there can possibly be real and enduring happiness. Hesitation there may be, and perhaps usually is in the earlier stages of the spiritual life, in surrendering ourselves to God: but, doubtless, the more simply and the more entirely we are enabled to do so, the more holy, the more happy, and the more lively, we shall be. It is of great avail to the soul’s prosperity to be ever and anon devoting ourselves *anew* to the Lord. Never, certainly, is a Believer so “satisfied, as it were, with marrow and fatness,” as when he can most truly say, “O God, THOU ART MY GOD;” and never, we are sure, are we so sensibly “alive unto God” as when we practically feel the import of the words, “Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God’s.” “I beseech you, therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”^b And when you want a Prayer of self-dedication, think of that in our Communion office wherein we say,—‘*And here we offer and present unto thee ourselves, our souls, and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee.*’ Pray this Prayer as

^a 2 Chron. vii. 14.

^b Rom. xii. 1.

well as *say* it, and “the consolations of God” shall not be “small with you.”

FOURTHLY—*Give yourselves unto extraordinary prayer.* We may not be able to command much leisure: but, in the busiest life time may be found to pray. Have we more to concern us than David had? And yet, under peculiarly trying circumstances, he says, “*I give myself unto prayer.*” In addition to his prayers, “seven times a-day” did David “*praise the Lord.*” Surely then it can be no impossibility for us to pray. In *heart* we may often be rising heavenward, and the more frequently we do so, the more constantly shall we be favoured with the quickening and reviving influences of the Holy Spirit. Should we, unhappily, be “so feeble that we cannot *speak,*” we may yet “*look unto Jesus.*” “The sorrowful *sighing* of the Saints” reaches his ear; and if we only *think* believingly, “If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole,” “the Lord will fulfil the *desire* of them that fear him.” “Return,” says he, “ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” And to the enquiry, “Wilt thou not revive us again?” the Lord says, Yes; “I will restore health unto thee, and will heal thee.” Then where religion has at all declined, and any children of God have, in any measure, been “beguiled from the simplicity that is in Christ,” extraordinary and earnest prayer will be found a most effectual means of good. Our strength will, thereby, be renewed as the eagle’s; we shall run and not be weary, walk and not faint. Even should our declension be so extreme, that we have little or no inclination left to pray, yet let us make the effort; and although we may bow a very reluctant knee, and may be very straitened at first in our desires, yet, it may be, the Lord “will have compassion upon us,” and so comfort

and revive our souls that it shall again become our felt determination, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." Then "Take with you words, and return unto the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously." So will the Lord hear and cause you to rejoice in him with renewed and more abounding thankfulness.

FIFTHLY—*Attend with constancy your Public Means.* An irregular attendance on the public ordinances of Religion is the occasion of much injury to yourselves and of discouragement to your Minister. Our office requires us to edify our people in the faith and practice of the Gospel. It is cheering and encouraging when we can say to a listening multitude of attentive hearers, "O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation." Would we, then, see our Church in prosperity, and the Saviour's blood-redeemed People adorned and beautified with all the fruits and graces of the Spirit? Would we see "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance" increasing within us as individuals, and amongst us as a religious community? Let us "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of *some* is." Rather be it glad-some to our hearts when any say to us, "Let us go unto the house of the Lord." Amiable and lovely are his Tabernacles. The more constantly we tread their hallowed floor and gaze upon his "glory so as we have seen it in his sanctuary," the more assuredly shall we "go from strength to strength," and grow in preparedness of mind for the advent of the Lord in glory, and for the purer worship and the sublimer joys of the eternal kingdom. Come from your closet into the congregation of the Faithful; and from the use of public means retire to your closet again. Then will "the

Lord be as the dew unto Israel : Israel should grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon : They should *revive* as the corn, and grow as the vine :” or in other words, “be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.”

SIXTHLY—*Apply to yourselves what you hear and read of God's Word.* “I have a message from God unto *thee*,” said Ehud to Eglon :^a and individuality of character will the Ambassador of Christ study to address in his announcement of the Gospel. And, therefore, “I will hear what the Lord God saith concerning *me*,” should be your individual determination whensoever you hear and read the Scriptures. It is the fault of many to hear and read for others, ‘*That suits such an one : This suits such an one,*’ is often the silent language of our hearts whilst we are hearing and reading the Holy Word. Whereas, we should rather say—‘Does this speak to *me*? Does it condemn any thing in *my* conduct? Does it command something which *I* do not? Does it promise any thing that *I* want?’ In this way should we apply the Scriptures. When hearers of the Gospel become fastidious and critical, they grow cold and dull. A corrective “lean-ness” is sent into their souls,^b and a word “sharper than any two-edged sword” becomes necessary in order to “try the thoughts and intents of their heart,” and to induce becoming humility and teachableness in them. Suffer, then, the Word you hear to come home to yourselves : Do so, and “your profiting shall appear unto all.”

And LASTLY—*Cherish mutual and brotherly kindness.* Communion one with another in the way of godliness is sweetly refreshing to the soul. “Did not our heart burn within us,” said the Disciples when Jesus drew

^a Judges iii. 20.

^b Psalm cvi. 15.

near and walked with them on the way to Emmaus. See in the third and fourth chapters of Ezra how the Jews encouraged and strengthened one another in rebuilding their city and temple. In like manner may you be "building yourselves up on your most holy faith." Let us pray both with and for each other. Let our "communing be only of peace." If a brother be "overtaken in a fault," do not let us spurn him from our society and converse : It is enough that he is fallen ; do not let us trample on him. "Consider thyself lest thou also be tempted" and fall. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ." His Law or Commandment is, "That ye love one another, as he hath loved you:" And, "By this, he says, shall all men know that ye are my Disciples if ye have love one to another." Under all spiritual distresses, let us remember that our "*God* doth not afflict willingly ;" and that, therefore, *we* should forbear to aggravate each other's pain. "He that hath torn will heal us ;" and it should be our pleasure also to "comfort one another."

Would we, then, that "He who hath shewed us great and sore troubles, should quicken us again, and bring us from the depths of the earth?" Would we that our Lord should revive us—"increase our greatness and comfort us on every side?" Let us use the *Means* of Spiritual Revival : and whereinsoever our Religion has declined, let us Recollect ourselves—Humble ourselves—Surrender ourselves anew to God—Give ourselves to extraordinary prayer—Attend with constancy our Public Means—Apply to ourselves what we hear and read of God's Word, and Cherish mutual and brotherly kindness. "Come, then, and let us in this way, return unto the Lord ; for he hath torn and he will heal us ; he hath smitten and he will bind us

up. After two days, he will revive us : in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight."

I have now noticed both The Causes of Religious Declension, and The Means of Spiritual Revival. And, protracted as our remarks may seem, I yet feel unwilling to conclude without adverting briefly to the ADVANTAGE of a revived and cheerful state of mind.

I observe that this Advantage will be great and estimable,

(1.) To *ourselves*. A new impulse will be given to our religious feelings and affections. We shall "delight ourselves in the Lord," whilst our love one towards each other will increase still more and more. Our Piety will be pleasant, active, and benevolent. We shall enjoy with a deeper sense of gratitude our gracious freedom. The prospect of "that goodly heritage" to which through the blood and righteousness of Christ, we are entitled, as our future and all-blissful portion, will make the wilderness in which we sojourn tolerable. And, eventually, as Judah came to the land of their fathers, so shall we come to "the *new* Jerusalem." "We shall obtain joy and gladness ; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

(2.) *Others*, too, will share the Advantage of our revival. Seeing how lowly, how forbearing, how kind, how cheerful, the followers of Jesus can be ; they will be constrained to think favourably of that gracious Lord who "taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his servants," and to allow the excellency of that Religion which can make a fallen sinful creature so holy, so contented, so happy. Saints will be edified ; timid Professors encouraged ; Mockers silenced ; and Sinners convinced and won to the love and practice of piety.

(3.) And, more than all, the *Lord Jesus Christ*, our God and Lord, will be magnified by our liveliness and zeal in his service. He is not honoured by our groveling in the dust of sense and sin. It is not his wish that we should walk in darkness. The doubts and fears, the murmurings and complainings, of a declining state, are not the songs which the children of Zion are called to sing. If our harps hang upon the willows of some Babylonish stream, it is our *sin* that hath suspended them there. It is because we hearken not unto him, that God casts us away, and we become wanderers and forsaken.^a But if, when he goes and turns from us, we acknowledge our sin and seek his face, he will turn again and revive us, and cause us to rejoice in him. And how free and unmerited will be the renewal of our joy! And then how sedulously should we cherish and preserve it for the honour of its gracious Donor! Emphatically is He “the Restorer of the Breach.” *His* Name it is that is “as ointment poured forth” to re-invigorate our oppressed and weary minds. *His* Spirit it is that must give efficacy to Means and revive us in the use of them. *Him*, therefore, should we aim to glorify in our professed subjection to him, and devotion to his service. “Forgetting the things that are behind, let us reach forth to the things that are before, and press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”^b And now, may the Lord cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit; increase in us true religion; fulfil us with his grace and heavenly benediction; make our Piety a lively, energetic, and influential principle; and give it to burn with still increasing purity and ardour till our deathless spirits shall be summoned to the world of everlasting life and love and glory!

^a Hos. ix. 17.

^b Phil. iii. 13, 14.

SERMON XXIII.

EXHORTATION TO REPENTANCE.

JOEL II. 12, 13.

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning ; And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God : for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

THE time in which the Prophet Joel wrote these words was remarkable. His people had greatly corrupted themselves. Sore and afflictive judgments were coming upon them. The day of their visitation was on its way, fraught with Divine displeasure. Fire was to devour the pastures, and flame to burn up the trees of the wood ; the rivers were to be dried up and the flocks to be consumed.^a Together with these threats of desolation, however, the Prophet was bidden to warn the people of their danger and to call them to repentance.

^a Chap. i. 19, 20.

“Blow ye,” said the Lord, “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand.”^a Thus mercy mingles with displeasure, and we see that amidst his severest judgments, “the Lord our God is a merciful God,” “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Nor does this apply exclusively to the people among whom the Prophet Joel sounded an alarm and blew the trumpet of warning. It applies equally to us: for we are all naturally “a stiff-necked and rebellious people.” Upon the careless and ungodly now no less than in other and earlier times, “a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,” rapidly approaches. “The day of the Lord is great and very terrible.” The sinners in Zion shall be afraid; fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrites.^b Still, however, does the Lord in the Gospel of his Son, say, “Repent,” and beseech sinners, by the Heralds of his salvation, to be reconciled unto him. “Now commandeth he all men, every where, to repent.”^c He wills not their death, nor hath he any pleasure at all that they should die.^d “*Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.*”

In these words we have, I conceive,

I. A duty enjoined:

II. The manner of its performance:

And III. Our encouragement to fulfil it.

^a Chap. ii. 1. ^b Isa. xxxiii. 14. ^c Acts xvii. 30. ^d Ezek. xviii. 23.

We have

I. *A DUTY enjoined.*

This duty is—To turn unto the Lord: “*turn ye even unto me*, saith the Lord.” Here is at once implied our alienation from the Lord our God, or, in plainer terms, our natural state. And we need only to say that we are turned *from* HIM, to say that we are fallen, depraved, and sinful creatures—‘miserable sinners,’ as we are accustomed to acknowledge in all the prayers and confessions of our Church. In being turned from God, we are turned from light to darkness, from holiness to sin, from blessedness to misery, from God to Satan. One of our Homiles, speaking of Man in his unchanged state, calls him ‘half a beast and half a devil,’ alluding probably to Eph. ii. 3. Our Reformers might have said with Paul, “We use great plainness of speech:” but, though plain, can we doubt the truth of it? Did not the Psalmist say, “So foolish was I and ignorant, I was *as a beast* before thee?”^a and does not “*the God of this world* blind the minds of them that believe not,” and as the spirit of rebellion “rule in all the children of disobedience?”^b Do we naturally delight either in God or in his Law? Do we not rather feel strongly averse to both? On the contrary, do we not find it easy to “fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind?” And wherefore, but because it is congenial with our taste and disposition to do so? Is it not the very language of human nature that says, “Make the Lord God of Israel to cease from before us?”^c and again, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?” Now, then, our duty is to “turn” from this state of alienation unto Him from whom we have so deeply re-

^a Psalm lxxiii. 22.

^b 2 Cor. iv. 4.

^c Isa. xxx. 11.

volted—"even unto ME, saith the Lord God." We are not to turn from one evil way to another, from one idol to another, from one religious profession to another; but unto GOD. *From* him we have turned; *to* him we must return. But, 'How,' you will perhaps inquiringly say to us; 'How are we thus to turn? Can we any more turn or convert ourselves, than the buried dead can, of their own accord, rise up and walk?' No; you cannot; for you cannot of yourselves have a mind or will thereto, (as our Catechism teaches) and therefore have ye need to pray for God's special and enabling grace. The impossibility is not natural but moral: consequently, our inability to turn ourselves to Him, does not lessen our obligation to do so. There is a propriety in the exhortation, "Turn ye," which our sinfulness and consequent weakness, cannot invalidate. It is, you observe, Almighty God himself that exhorts us to turn unto him: our inability to do so is our sin. And when any duty is enjoined upon us, it is enjoined, *not* because we are able of ourselves to fulfil it, *but* because God is minded to shew us the deep depravity and utter helplessness of our fallen nature, and how surely "without Him, we can do nothing."

'We cannot think a gracious thought,
We cannot feel a good desire,
Till He who spake the world from nought
The power into our hearts inspire:
And then we in the Spirit groan,
And then we give him back his own.'

His grace by Christ must prevent (or *go before*) us, to renew our will and make it good, and must work with us when we have that good will. *Means* of grace the Lord hath appointed and bestowed upon us, whereby we may obtain grace to do what he requireth of us.

“*Turn ye unto me*, saith the Lord:” “I can do *all things*,” and therefore *this*, may the contrite and believing sinner say, “through Christ who strengtheneth me.” When Almighty God works within us “both to will and to do,” it becomes then quite possible with us to “work out our own salvation.”^a “With fear and trembling”—with humble, earnest, persevering diligence, indeed, it behoves us to labour: at the same time, we may labour with assurance of ultimate success, and of everlasting triumph, because “the Lord will have respect unto the work of his hands, and will perfect that which concerneth us.” To his penitent and returning people, the Lord says, “How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?” And yet he does so, and many a poor sinner does he put among his children. And then he adds, “Thou shalt call me, My Father; *and shalt not turn away from me.*” And again the Lord says, “I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and *I will not turn away from them*, to do them good.” Delightful promises! Once returned unto the Lord, ye shall not turn from him again; nor will a forgiving faithful God turn away from you or cease to do you good. Persuaded of this, our duty becomes our privilege, and daily would we “take with us words and *turn unto the Lord our God.*”

Such being the duty enjoined, we come to notice

II. *The MANNER of its performance*:—

“Turn ye even to me—with *all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning*: And *rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God.*”

^a Phil. ii. 12, 13.

Observe, first, it is “with the *heart*” we are required to turn unto the Lord. No mere change of opinion, or reformation of life, or outward profession of godliness, will suffice. Be it always remembered that “the Lord looketh on the *heart*.” If the *heart* be not right with him, nothing is right. Many professedly turn to God; but their profession is like the “*Hail, Master,*” of Judas: they kiss him merely to betray him. Many seemingly turn to God on the Sabbath in the ordinary Services of the Church; but of whom God might justly complain, “This people draweth nigh to me with their *lips*, and honoureth me with their *mouth*, but their *heart* is far from me.” Now, such are ‘dissemblers with God,’ and to them God says, “*In vain do ye worship me.*”

Moreover, it is with our *whole* heart that we must turn unto the Lord our God: “turn ye unto me with *all* your heart,” is his command. Many persons, we believe, would turn to him, if they might do so with part of their heart only, reserving some portion of it for themselves, the world, and sin. But, God will brook no rival. No other lords beside him must have dominion over us. “Ye shall find me, when ye shall seek for me with *all* your heart,” is the Lord’s recorded promise.^a It is with *all* the heart, with *all* the mind, with *all* the strength, and with *all* the soul, we are taught in the catechism of our infant days, the Lord our God must be loved. This is the first and the great commandment.^b Let not, then, the Ministers of Jesus be blamed as requiring too much of their people, and as making the way of life needlessly narrow and difficult:—with “*all* your heart” does God himself require you to turn unto him: Can your Minister do more?

And when the heart, with all its affections, motives,

^a Jer. xxix. 13.

^b Matt. xxii. 38.

and desires, returns to its rightful owner, there is nothing which delights its Owner more than to see it touched with tender contrite sorrow. If angels joy over one sinner that repenteth, we may well suppose the Lord of angels to feel a peculiar pleasure when a lost and wandering soul is found. Brought to himself, and restored to the enjoyment of his Father's favour, his Father will for ever be glorified and exalted in him. Does the Lord see a poor sorrowing penitent at his feet, imploring mercy and craving to be saved? He says, "I will surely have mercy upon him." And sweetly assured are we by Zephaniah, "He will save; he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over thee with singing."^a While, then, a sinner here below is turning "with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning" to the Lord, there is joy in Heaven over him.

"*With fasting*" are we directed to turn unto the Lord. I do approve of using such abstinence as will tend, through grace, to bring the body into subjection to the spirit, and further the life and power of religion in the soul. It is, doubtless, one means whereby the heart may more thoroughly be humbled, and more entirely turned unto God. It may be unpopular in these days of degeneracy to insist upon this point: but, it is plainly our duty to fast. 'Yes'—some would say to us 'to fast from sin.' True; this is our duty at *all* times; but from what Jesus Christ says in Matt. vi. it is clear he expected his followers *occasionally* to abstain from meat, or what usually would be esteemed a lawful gratification of the appetite. He fasted himself. His disciples, on one occasion, could not eject a devil, and the reason assigned for it was, because that kind of demon

^a Chap. iii. 17.

went not forth but by prayer and *fasting*—but by *unusual* means, and means which probably the disciples were not, at that time, exercising. David fasted. Daniel also and Cornelius fasted. All the first followers of Christ, in short, were “in fastings often.” It is a means of grace which the really devout of every age and place have been wont to use. Our Church requires it of all her members: and sure I am where occasional abstinence is practised, it will be found a most effectual means of softening the mind into a tender seriousness, quickening the soul in the ways of Piety, and elevating the desires and hopes above temporal and perishable things. If fasting should induce mourning and weeping, a joy will mingle with our sorrow of a purer and a sublimer kind than any joy the world can afford. The tears of repentance bring with them their own relief; and much soever as may be felt while we mourn and weep for sin, we shall wish to feel our unworthiness still more sensibly. Self-denial is a primary requisite in the religion of Jesus Christ. A meek and lowly spirit is what the Saviour engages to teach all that come to him and sit with modest teachableness at his feet. “A broken and a contrite heart” is that sacrifice which the Lord least of all despises. Indeed, brokenness and contrition of heart is that *rending* of the heart which he requires of us. Among the Jews it was usual to express vehemence of feeling or intensity of grief, by rending the garments: but “*rend your heart,*” saith the Lord, “*and not your garments.*” No external acts unaccompanied with inward feeling constitute contrition. We oft-times hear people speak of a broken heart: but this is not that unaffected sorrow for sin which the Lord approves. “The sorrow of the world worketh death”—it is “*godly* sorrow which worketh repentance unto life.” The penitence of a truly contrite spirit is widely

different from the despair of the worldly man. Hope and joy mingle with the one; gloominess and horror compose the other. Tears may bedew a Magdalen's or a prodigal's cheeks: but they will be tears for having wept no sooner, and these will the God of love and mercy wipe away. Sorrows may possess the soul and fears may distract the conscience; but they will be as the passing remnant of the storm which precedes the Sun of righteousness ere he breaks in new and resplendent glory on the humbled and returning sinner. The heart may come with fasting, weeping, and mourning to the Mercy-seat; but the blood of atonement awaits its approach there, and He that sits thereon hath said, "I will bring it health and cure." "O Israel! O sorrowing soul, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help." "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you:" "and whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

In this manner, then, "let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." And now from noticing The *Manner* in which the duty enjoined is required to be performed, we notice

III. and finally, *Our ENCOURAGEMENT to fulfil it.*

"Turn ye unto me with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, and rend your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God—FOR *He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.*" Precious and beautiful words, my Brethren, are these! Their every syllable breathes balm, consolation, and encourage-

ment, to the wounded Spirit. GRACIOUS—MERCIFUL—SLOW *to anger* and *of GREAT kindness*, is the Lord our God. This language is accordant with the Almighty's Revelation of himself to Moses whilst Moses was hid in the cleft of the rock at Horeb. And all this loveliness of character do we see embodied and manifested in the Man Christ Jesus. He is Emmanuel—God with us. The splendour of Jehovah is veiled in the lowliness of Jesus. The Eternal Spirit says, "Draw nigh unto God and he will draw nigh unto you:" and draw nigh we may, assuring ourselves of a gracious reception, a merciful acceptance, a rich and an abundant blessing. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." "His secret also is among them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant." Is there, then, among you one weeping penitent? one weary sinner? one mournful soul? Thus saith the Lord to such an one, I am *gracious*: the riches of my grace are given unto you in my Son: Come, taste and see how gracious the Lord is: What want soever you may feel, I am "the God of *all* grace," and therefore of that very and particular grace which you need. I am "in Christ reconciling the world unto myself:" Rend then your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God, and ye shall find me waiting to be gracious unto you. O what an attractive radiancy does the Christian Faith cast around the character of the eternal Deity! and how should the assurance of his graciousness encourage our individual return to him!

But, let me further ask: Is there one to whom I speak that feels the weight and burden of his guiltiness? one that can feelingly and truly say, 'The remembrance of my sins is grievous to me; the burden of them is intolerable?' one whose bosom swells with unutterable

prayer for mercy?—To that individual God says, “I am *merciful*: Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Groan ye may “for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage:” but He who saw with determination to deliver them the affliction of Israel in Egypt, sees your sorrows also, and kindly says, “*I know them.*” He will deliver you too, for “his mercy is ever more and more towards them that fear him.” Vengeance, truly, is his; and he will recompense fury to his adversaries; but in the contrite and humble spirit “*mercy* shall be set up and magnified for ever.” Where he is gracious, the Lord will be merciful. Mercy spares whom grace redeems. And it is the sweetest portion of our Message to any lost and perishing fellow-sinner whom we invite to return unto the Lord, to assure him that the Lord to whom we invite his return is merciful. Merciful! Merciful! is the Lord your God: Oh! that ye may presently taste the sweetness of his mercy!

But, ‘O (does some poor heart-broken penitent exclaim) I have sinned so long and often; I have turned so entirely away from God; I am so sinful; I can only dread a holy God’s displeasure, and can scarcely hope for mercy.’ To such an one God says, “*I am SLOW to anger and of GREAT kindness.*” Judgment is a strange work with me: You fear me because you think of me only as “hating iniquity, transgression, and sin;” and from the essential holiness of my nature constrained to do so: but, look at me in your Mediator and Redeemer: think of the blood that streamed on Calvary: think of the purpose for which it flowed: and though humbled for your crimes, and mournful for Him you pierced, you will not despair of mercy. Swift as an

arrow might my anger wound you ; but it is slow and reluctant in its approaches to you. Your guiltiness indeed is great : but my kindness is greater still : and “ With *everlasting* kindness will I have mercy on you.” I smote your Surety ; I cannot smite you too. “ Look unto me and be ye saved.” Need we any further argument to “ arise and to go to our Father ?” Let us beware how we dishonour him by doubting the slowness of his anger and the greatness of his love. It must not be doubted for a moment that “ the Lord is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” and that “ his goodness is infinite.”

Still, however, some trembling enquirer may say,— ‘ Well ; but awful threatenings are pointed against me : how shall I escape them ?’ Escape them ? we reply, easily : for, “ *the Lord repenteth him of the evil*” and will never execute his threatenings of displeasure on “ the souls that seek him.” He repented of the evil he thought to have inflicted upon the Ninevites when the ministry of Jonah led them, with fasting and with weeping and with mourning, to humble themselves before him. And “ Who knoweth,” asks the Prophet Joel, immediately after our text, “ Who knoweth if he will return, and repent, and leave a blessing behind him ?” And for whom would a blessing be left ? For those, certainly, who turned and sought the Lord with desire and fervency, and whose souls were humbled with fasting and weeping and mourning before him. And would not the blessing of the Lord enrich, console, and prosper its favoured possessors for ever ? And need they fear the execution of God’s threatenings upon them ? Most surely not. Be not, then, discouraged. Cry, “ Turn thou me and I shall be turned :” and if any say, “ Hold thy peace :” cry thou “ *so much the*

more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." Doubt not but he will soon command thee to be brought unto him, and when he says, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee;" thou mayest ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee. Thy sins shall be cast into the depths of oblivion, and "the days of thy mourning shall be ended." "For, thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Such is The duty enjoined; The manner of its performance; and Our encouragement to fulfil it, as declared in the text before us. In closing, MARK

The dreadful consequence of final impenitence.

Let us suppose a sinner never to turn unto the Lord; never to humble himself with fasting, and weeping, and mourning for his sins: Let us suppose him to resist all the beseeching entreaties of a merciful and gracious God to repent and to believe the Gospel: Let us suppose him to despise and reject the Saviour, to grieve the Spirit, to quench the Spirit's influence, and to go forward in the perpetual love of himself, the world, and sin: Let us suppose him, finally, to die in this state of hardened impenitence,—O, who can conceive the consequence of a life and death such as we have supposed? What despairing horror, what agonizing dread, must seize an unforgiven soul in the moment of its departure hence! Fain would it, doubtless, turn unto the Lord; but "the door is shut," and no knock can open it. Fast would it now, and weep and mourn, and that with bitterness, if fasting, weeping, and mourning would

avail it any good : but, no ; the cries and groans of hell reach not the ear of a slighted and forgotten God in heaven. Mercy is withheld ; vials of wrath are poured forth. The finally impenitent may refuse the cup of God's displeasure : but, "*it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup to drink, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Ye shall CERTAINLY drink.*" If any man soweth to the flesh, he *shall* of the flesh reap corruption. Men do not gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles. If he obtain not mercy and find not grace in this world, the God of grace and mercy will cease to be such toward him in the world of future retribution. And never will the Lord repent him of the evil he thinks to do to the finally impenitent : no, *never* : for while "the righteous shall go into life eternal, the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment."—"Therefore, also, *now* saith the Lord, turn ye even unto me." "Turn ye, turn ye ; for why will ye die ?" "Blessed, truly, are they that mourn : for they shall be comforted." Gracious, kind, and merciful is our God. "If ye will return, Return,"—is his message to us. "We beseech you that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." We warn you from him : and we bid you to mark the consequences of final impenitence in hope that ye will truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Gospel.

"He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

THE MANNER OF LOVE BESTOWED UPON US: ITS
CONSEQUENCES; IMMEDIATE AND REMOTE.

1 JOHN III. 1, 2.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! therefore the world knoweth us not; because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

THERE is a moral grandeur in Christianity, considered as the remedial means of man's recovery to holiness and to God, that surpasses every other visible manifestation of Divine power and wisdom whatsoever. External objects do indeed affect us more strongly; but this is because we are creatures of sense and feeling, and because too our mental capacities are darkened and enfeebled. As in the rising of the great Luminary of day, the feebler brilliancy of the stars retires into obscurity, so, to a spiritual discernment, no glory remains

in any thing, by reason of the excelling glory of the Christian Faith. The very simplicity of the Gospel, bespeaks its divinity. Both in nature and in art, the mightiest and most surprising results often proceed from the simplest means : and it will be found that our admiration increases in inverse proportion to the minuteness or apparent weakness of the primary agent employed. Thus the creation and creation's fall ; the present degeneracy and eventual recovery of "all things," are but the evolutions of a "purpose" in the eternal Mind, existing there before the sun and moon and stars commenced their courses. The vast machinery at work in nature, in Providence, and in grace, will issue in the pardon, peace, and blessedness of God's dear family. Therefore, says the Apostle to the Corinthian Church, "all things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's." Thus, when all the Revelations of God shall stand in manifest accomplishment, it will be clearly seen that "known unto God were all his works from the beginning of the creation," and that "the eternal purpose purposed in himself" will stand embodied in the salvation of his people to his own everlasting praise. "*Behold, then, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ! therefore the world knoweth us not ; because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God ; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.*"

In these words we see somewhat of the nature and excellence of real Christianity ; and from them we shall be led to notice

I. The *manner of love* which the Father hath bestowed upon us :

II. The *consequences* which flow to us from that love :

And III. The *attention* with which the whole should be regarded.

Let us notice

I. The *manner of love* which the Father hath bestowed upon us.

An idea more replete with sublimity and beauty, was never couched in words, than when the beloved Disciple said, "GOD IS LOVE." It fixes the centre of beneficence in the Deity, and sends its emanations through the universe. But we are not concerned at present so much with Love in the abstract, as with the character of its manifestation towards mankind. This we say is

1. *Sovereign* in its exercise ;
2. *Gracious* in its communication ;
3. *Merciful* in its regards ;

And 4. *Everlasting* in its continuance.

It is, 1. *Sovereign* in its exercise. The Lord our God is "the great and only Potentate : " he has therefore an uncontrollable independency in action. Hence he bestows his love as, and where, and when, and on whom he pleases. This he does without accounting to any one for his bestowment of it. He "called Abraham alone" from amongst his idolatrous kindred. "Jacob, says God, have I loved, but Esau have I hated : " the *one* shall inherit a land flowing with the milk and honey of rich and profuse abundance ; the mountains and the heritage of the *other* shall be laid

waste for the dragons of the wilderness.^a We are chosen in Christ out of mankind, to be brought by him to everlasting salvation as vessels made to honour. This choice must necessarily be irrespective of all terms or conditions in us. Without, in the smallest measure, desiring to infringe upon the responsibility of the creature, or man's hereafter judgment "according to the deeds done in the body:" Admitting, too, with the utmost readiness, that Almighty God has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth," whilst "his tender mercies are over all his works;" his grace is, nevertheless, undeniably peculiar and distinguishing; still, how much soever some persons may be favoured, we admit not that injury is done to others. Where all deserve to perish, no one has a right to complain. God will be justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth. There is not now an enlightened or spiritual individual member of the Saviour's holy and catholic Church but will cordially adopt the language, "*We love him, because he FIRST loved us:*" and in the day of final consummation, when God's sovereign love shall be fully manifested in all its wonderful effects, it will doubtless be the acknowledgement of all—"Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus: Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints."

2. The love which the Father bestows upon us is *gracious* in its communication. He *bestows* it: we neither earn nor merit it. There could be nothing in sinful unholy creatures to win the favourable loving-kindness of a God "glorious in holiness" and supremely blessed. Nor could sinful unholy creatures do any

^a Comp. Rom. ix. 13, with Mal. i. 2, 3.

thing either to avert displeasure or to deserve grace. The promise of a Seed that should bruise the serpent's head, was given even without solicitation on the part of man : and with the same gracious freedom was that promise subsequently renewed in after ages, until the pre-appointed moment when the celestial Visitant said to the virgin-mother, "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." And still are "all men concluded under sin." "There is no difference" naturally in our state, and there would be none but for the manner of love our Almighty Father hath bestowed upon us. The people of Israel found grace in the wilderness :^a and it is "the grace of God which bringeth salvation" to his people in every age.^b Graciously doth he deal with us ; graciously doth he grant us his Law ; graciously doth he take away our iniquity, and graciously doth he receive us.^c So that we may salute every child of God's free adoption, in the language of the Angel to Mary, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured !" or in the words of the Angel to Daniel, "O man, greatly beloved." And sure we are every one so adopted and so beloved will most readily acknowledge with St. Paul, "*By THE GRACE OF GOD I am what I am.*"

But, 3. The love which is bestowed upon us is *merciful* in its regards. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." And the Son of God further "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "And hereby perceive we the love of God

^a Jer. xxxi. 2.

^b Tit. ii. 11.

^c Gen. xxxiii. 11, Psalm cxix. 29, and Hos. xiv. 2.

(the Son,) because he laid down his life for our sakes." This is the wondrous proof of the Divine benignity. Had we been merely told that the Father loved us with a sovereign and a gracious love, we might, indeed, have been gratified and pleased with the announcement; but possibly a doubt whether the infinitely holy God could love such utterly unworthy creatures, in order to their pardon and justification, might have marred our gratification and pleasure. As it is, we are assured that our Father loves us. Christianity is shewed to be *a dispensation of grace*; and in the voluntary humiliation, the suffering life, the ignominious death, and the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ, we see how mercifully he designed our redemption from sin and wretchedness. Yes, let us dwell upon the sacred theme; in the Redeemer's incarnation—in the dangers of his infant days—in the persecutions of his maturer years—in the anguish of Gethsemane—in the mockery of Herod's judgment-hall—in the thorny crown—the scourge, the cross and all its untold agony, we see the *manner* of love wherewith the Father loved us. We see it, too, in the mission of the Spirit to quicken and to illuminate our souls. We see it in that Eden of delight which stretches prospectively before us into realms of immortality and glory. We feel it in the deadening of our affections towards things seen and temporal and the drawment of our minds heavenward. "In his *love* and in his pity he *redeems* us."

4. The Father's love toward us is, finally, *everlasting* in its continuance. "From everlasting to everlasting is God's mercy upon them that fear him." We may add millions of ages to millions of ages, and through and beyond them all will the love of God towards his redeemed and believing people be extended. True; he will remind us of our base original—point us to "the

rock whence we were hewed, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged," and "cause us to know our abominations"—but, he will say, "Now when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I looked upon thee, and, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. I washed thee: I anointed thee: I clothed thee: I decked thee: thou wast exceeding beautiful: thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through my comeliness that I put upon thee, saith the Lord God."^a In accordance with this peculiarly striking Scripture, Paul says, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,"^b—while we were yet "ungodly," "polluted in our blood," morally and spiritually unclean, did our Almighty Father love us; because he loved us he drew us (for "no man cometh unto the Son except the Father which hath sent him, *draw* him,") as with the cords of love and with the bonds of a man to his Son. In Christ we are accepted, and in him we are "complete." God beautifies the meek with salvation. He rejoices over them to do them good. He will bless them to all eternity. It cannot be that the Lord should *forget* to be gracious, or that his promise should fail. It is our own infirmity if we think the contrary. The life he gives us in his Son is *eternal* life; and through ever-enduring ages will God bestow his love in still richer and more abundant measures on his chosen and redeemed people.

Mark, then, *the manner of love* which the Father hath bestowed upon us: it is a *sovereign*, a *gracious*, a *merciful*, and an *everlasting* love.

^a Ezek. xvi. 6—14.

^b Rom. v. 8.

We notice

II. The *consequences* which flow to us from that love :—

The consequences which flow to us from the sovereign, the gracious, the merciful, and the everlasting love of the Father, are inconceivably great and glorious. Two only are named in our text,—the one immediate; the other remote: to these we shall confine our attention. These two consequences are—*first, Present adoption into God's family*: and *secondly, Future restoration to his image*.

There is, first, *Adoption into God's family* :—"that we should be called," says St. John, "*the sons of God*." God has a family—a family of happy and rejoicing children. In 2 Cor. vi. 18, we read of the "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." A name even better than that of sons and daughters is promised to them who keep the Sabbaths of the Lord and take hold upon his Covenant. And "because ye are sons," says Paul to the Galatian converts, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your heart, crying, Abba, Father!" This is that "Spirit of adoption" which reveals the Father's love, sheds abroad a reciprocal affection in the regenerate heart, testifies of Jesus, loosens the bands of wickedness, sets the oppressed prisoner free, seals us unto the day of our full redemption, and "witnesses with our spirits" that we are really and truly the adopted children of the everlasting Father. And what a privilege is this! Who can conceive its value? who can describe its excellence? "CHILDREN OF GOD, and if children, then HEIRS: heirs OF GOD, and JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST." And wherein does this joint heirship consist? Daniel chap. vii. 13, 14, and 27, will inform you. O world in which

we sojourn! what are your riches, titles, pleasures, friendships, compared with this? How all-inferior are ye to “the goodly heritage” of the sons of God!—And observe, “Beloved: *now* are we sons of God,” *now* are we such; it is a *present* consequence of our Father’s love. If an earthly Sovereign were to stoop from his exalted throne, and notice kindly one of your poor children; adopt him, provide for him, and confer upon him some earthly dignity; it would occasion much remark and gratulation, doubtless, among the friends and neighbours of your child: but how beneath the condescending goodness of the Lord and the glory of his adopted children would this be!—It is true, our ennobling privileges, our unfettered hopes, our brilliant prospects, come not under the observation of the world: “*the world knoweth us not.*” It knew not God when he was manifest in human flesh: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” It cannot, therefore, be expected that his children should be particularly honoured and respected. In fact, they are commonly despised and rejected. Their motives are often misjudged and deemed insincere; their conduct is misrepresented and condemned. With their peace, and joy, and hope; the source of their placidity, and the end of all they suffer, the world is totally unacquainted. But, blessed are the sons of God, though the generality of men be ignorant of them and acknowledge them not. With personal appropriation can they look up to the dread I AM, “the Lord of lords, and the King of kings, and say, “*Our Father.*” With conscious joy do they possess “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Love is the habitual disposition of their mind. Kindliness is the sphere in which they move. They “walk with God as dear children.” They are the blossoms which cheer and enliven the moral wilderness.

We admit, indeed, that in our present state of imperfection, we are but *heirs*—not *possessors* fully of our goodly heritage. We are under “tutors and governors” now—under necessary discipline and correction : but when “the time appointed of the Father is come,” we shall inherit all that the sons of God are “by grace through faith” entitled to possess. For, as another consequence, flowing to us from our Father’s love, there is

Secondly, a *Future restoration to his image* : “it doth not yet appear what we shall be—how great, how holy, how happy ; but we know that, *when he shall appear, we shall be like him : for we shall see him as he is.*” In his image, we were originally formed ; and to his image it is the Divine intention to restore us. Hence, “To be conformed *to the image of his Son,*” we are declared to be predestinated.^a It is *now* the great Regenerator’s office to renew us in the spirit of our mind, and so to form within us the moral likeness of the Deity : by and by the Saviour whom we look for from Heaven, will appear and “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.”^b “The time of the restitution of all things” approaches ; the new Heavens’ and the new Earth’s Creator is on his new-creating embassy ; already, in the strife of nations and the tumult of the people, we recognize the thunder of his chariot-wheels, and soon the “Behold, I create all things new,” will meet the listening ear of his expectant children : then will the morning of an endless day dawn upon the dark and dreary tomb, and as it hastens on its way, every child of God may say, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” Satisfied shall we be with our God and with all his dealings

^a Gen. i. 27. Rom. viii. 29.

^b Phil. iii. 21.

towards us : satisfied with ourselves ; with our abode ; with our company ; with our employments ;—fully and for ever satisfied. We shall “*see God.*” We shall “*see him AS HE IS.*” Nor that alone : the beatific vision will be transforming in its influence upon us. As the glories of Immanuel become more and more manifested to our adoring gaze, we shall become more and more like the excellence we adore. Recollect who it is that says this : it is John ; it is the loving and beloved Disciple—*that* Disciple who had witnessed the transfiguration of his Lord in the holy mount ; who had seen in prophetic vision the new Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven ; had seen the multitude of the redeemed from the Earth, and heard their voice as it had been the voice of many waters or of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia !—it is *he* who says, “when we see him we shall be like him.” Oh, who can conceive what these few and simple words imply ! Ponder over them as we may, our meditation must close with the acknowledgment of John, “It doth not yet appear what we shall be.” It must suffice us now to know that when we see our Lord, we shall be like him. Mansions ; kingdoms ; crowns ; await the sons of God. Their inheritance is “an inheritance in light.” What makes the present state a scene of suffering and sorrow ? The darkness of ignorance and sin. What will make our Heaven hereafter ? The presence of God and of the Lamb. “God is Light :” and “the Lamb is the Light thereof.” His children are “children of light and of the day.” Thus “there shall be *no night* there.” No : the brilliancy of an eternal noon will prevail in the new creation. We shall there “know even as also we are known”—be “perfect as our Father is perfect,” and “holy as He who hath called us is holy.” “As we *have borne* the image of the earthy, we shall also bear

the image of the heavenly." This world may not know us, acknowledge us, or esteem us: we shall be known, acknowledged, and beloved, when we sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of our Father. *That* world will know *us* because it knows our Lord. He is well known there as the central point of blessedness: and we, too, shall be confessed as the objects of the Father's sovereign, gracious, merciful, and everlasting love.

Having noticed The manner of love which the Father hath bestowed upon us, and The consequences which flow to us from that love; it remains only for me to state,

III. and finally, The *attention* with which the whole should be regarded.

We may be sure that, in general, where the word "Behold" occurs in Scripture, there is something annexed to it worthy of our devout consideration. And to what subject could "Behold" be affixed with more propriety than to the manner of love which the Father hath bestowed upon us and to the consequences which flow to us from that love? With reverend and profound attention, then, let us regard these things. Whilst the religion of many is superficial as the summer's brook, let us seek to realize the peace which flows as a river, and the righteousness that abounds as the waves of the sea. To this end, I would say, Be not satisfied with any attention you may pay the Gospel, unless it *deepens your humility; strengthens your confidence; and excites your affection.*

Your attention should *deepen your humility.* "As the elect of God, holy and beloved," we are exhorted to cultivate "*humbleness of mind.*" Contemplation on

undeserved favour tends materially to produce this. The more we learn of God ; his love ; his truth ; his grace and faithfulness, the more lowly in our own eyes shall we become. It was when the Lord God was “ pacified toward Israel,” that Israel was to “ remember and to be confounded, and never to open his mouth any more because of his shame.” In like manner, if we have any evidence of God’s love within us—if our heart be sprinkled from an evil conscience—if we enjoy a powerful sense of the Divine favour, and feel sweetly at peace with all above us and around us, it should lead us individually to say, ‘ Why *me*, Lord, why *me* ? Why pass by the angels that kept not their first estate, and assume *my* nature ? Why pass by, too, millions of my fellow-creatures, and fasten thy regards on *me* ? Why do *I* choose thee while so many reject thee ? How am *I* within the door of mercy, whilst others neither knock for admittance nor care to come when called ? What has changed *me* from a rebel to a child ? Why does the cross of Jesus so comfort and delight *my* soul, while many with heedless indifference crucify him afresh ? Why do *I* look for thine appearing, Lord, while many dread thy coming ? O, why am I thus, and whence is the Lord so gracious and merciful to *me* ?’ Reasoning such as this will tend to deepen your humility. You will lie low before the Lord. Grateful and admiring wonder will fill your minds. The manner of love bestowed upon you will appear to be a marvellous mercy. Like Abraham you will confess yourselves to be “ but dust and ashes.” Like Jacob you will say, “ I am not worthy of the least of all the mercy and of all the truth thou shewest me.” Like Paul you will feel yourselves to be “ less than the least.” With Zechariah you will exclaim, “ How great is his goodness !” and with John,

“ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us !”

Your attention, moreover, should *strengthen your confidence*. We are very far from recommending a presumptuous confidence. Some persons, we grieve to say, can talk of the love and the grace of God with much apparent earnestness, and yet manifest a very unhumbled spirit. Now, this we deprecate. No : the grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth us to deny ALL ungodliness and worldly lusts. Every man that hath this hope in Jesus Christ, purifieth himself, even as he is pure : and such an one may most surely confide in the power and love and mercy of the Lord for whom he waits, and in whose likeness he trusts to awake. Doubts and fears do not honour a Father of mercies and a faithful God. Their *indulgence*, we believe to be sinful, because they implicate the Divine veracity, and oppose the prevalence of the Spirit’s consolation. To increase, then, your confidence, contemplate attentively the manner of love bestowed upon you. Think how free, how full, how changeless, is that love. Think of your present adoption into God’s dear family, and your prospective glory, honour, and immortality. To your weakness, oppose your Redeemer’s strength ; to your sinfulness his righteousness ; to your poverty his riches ; to your doubts his promises. Think how ye were loved while yet ye were aliens, foreigners, and strangers both to your God and to his covenant. Mark the 14th. and 19th. verses of the chap. whence our text is taken, and be ambitious to say as unhesitatingly as the beloved disciple said—“ *We know ; we know.*” Only behold the love of God and see yourselves interested in its consequences, and then may you believe yourselves addressed in that beautiful passage, wherein the everlasting Father himself speaks to his adopted

children, saying, “ Be strong and of a good courage : be strong and very courageous ; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed ; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”^a “ I *know*,” should you individually aspire to say, “ I *know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” In *that day* will you receive your ‘ perfect consummation and bliss both in body and soul,’ and prove that twice-repeated declaration to be true—“ *My people shall never be ashamed.*”^b

Your attention, in fine, should *excite your affection*. “ The love of Christ” was the grand and constraining principle of St. Paul’s conduct. It was his chief apology to those who thought his own and his fellow-labourer’s zeal excessive.^c And it is this, only this, principle of love, that will make our obedience willing and delightful. Whatever, then, will, as a means, increase our filial regard to our God and Saviour, should be greatly valued and carefully improved. Never shall we rise to the full blessedness of “ the common salvation,” unless the love of God be shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. It is here the piety of the generality is so defective : it wants the ardour and the warmth of love. The works of a watch, however exquisitely made, will not answer their intended end without a mainspring : In like manner, the forms of religion, however apostolical or correct, will avail but little, if love do not animate and controul the whole. Do you ask, How can we love an *unseen* Saviour ? I answer, easily. If one whom we never saw or had opportunity of seeing, did us a kindness, spake favourably of us, and bestowed upon us, through

^a Jos. i. 6, 9.^b Joel ii. 26, 27.^c 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

another's mediation, some needed help, should we not feel, when informed of his beneficence, the kindlings of a grateful affection in our heart towards him? Suppose this friend to be our Almighty Father:—let us think upon his love in Christ Jesus towards us: could we do so long, unmoved? Should we not rather realize the sentiment of Peter in his 1 Epis. i. 8? And from contemplating our Father's love towards us, we should ourselves become affectionate in our spirit; mild in our deportment; beautiful in conduct. Enemies would again be compelled to say, 'See how these Christians love one another!' Our piety would be deep, energetic, and influential. It would then be no difficulty to forego every thing that is opposed to a Father's will. His word; his day; his ways; his children; would all be respected and valued. Suspect your regard to the love bestowed upon you, while you yourselves remain cold and unaffected by it. Meditate upon it till you can truly and rejoicingly say, in the language of a favourite hymn,

“Jesus, my soul adoring bends
 To love so full, so free:
 But may I hope that love extends
 Its sacred power to me?
 What glad returns can I impart
 For favours so divine?
 O take my all—my worthless heart,
 And make it only thine.”

SERMON XXV.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES URGED.

ACTS xvii. 11, 12.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed.

IN the xvith. chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we have some account of Paul and Silas's travels. After visiting the cities of Derbe and Lystra, and travelling through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia, they came into Macedonia. At Philippi, a large and beautiful city of Macedonia, they halted. Persecution, however, awaited these Preachers of the Gospel there. Though a certain woman, named Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened, attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul, yet others, who feared their iniquitous gains were endangered by the ministry of the Apostle, rose up together against Paul and Silas, and committed them as troublers of their city to the common prison. But

stripes, imprisonment, and contumely, cannot greatly affect the happiness of believers in Jesus. “At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.” Nor was their gracious Master inattentive to the voice of their prayer and the melody of their praise. He interposed miraculously for the delivery of his servants: and through his wonder-working power, the Jailer himself was constrained to bring Paul and Silas forth, and to enquire, “Sirs, what must *I* do to be saved?” Leaving him and all his house converts to the faith and love of Jesus Christ, they called on the pious Lydia; saw their few despised brethren; comforted them, and departed. Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came, we read in the xviith. chapter, to Thessalonica, where was a Synagogue of the Jews, and where Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. Here, too, the enmity of the carnal mind was awakened and excited against the holy humbling truths of the Gospel. A regular process of persecution was commenced against Paul and his companion. This envious and malicious interference on the part of the Thessalonians, induced the Brethren immediately to send away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, (another city of Macedonia) who coming thither, attended as before the Synagogue of their countrymen. Now, *The Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed.*

In our consideration of this incident in the Apostolic narrative, we shall mark particularly three things:—

- I. The *attention* shewn by the Bereans to the ministry of St. Paul :
- II. The *conduct* they were induced to adopt :
- And III. The *result* of their calm and dispassionate enquiry.

Aid our contemplations, Lord, by thy most gracious and ready help ; and give thy Holy Ghost to lead thy servants into truth and godliness !

Let us mark

- I. The *attention* shewn by the Bereans to the ministry of St. Paul.

They “received the word with all readiness of mind.” This ready reception of the word argued a simple teachable disposition in this People, peculiarly pleasing and encouraging. Hence, their attention was prompt, cordial, and submissive. The aversion which human nature feels, in its lapsed and depraved condition, to the Truth of God, was taken away in them. They felt their helplessness and were willing to be led. Dissatisfied with their present views, they prayed for further and more satisfactory information. This prayer was answered. By revelation, Paul assuredly gathered that the Lord had called Silas and himself to preach the Gospel unto them.^a Coming to Berea, they found the people assembled in the house of God. They were together, as in the case of Cornelius and his company, present before the Lord to “hear words whereby they might be saved.” The mind of the hearer was as soil prepared for the word of the Preacher—ready meekly to receive what the Minister of grace should be disposed

^a Acts xvi. 9, 10.

and influenced to say. Doubtless, St. Paul adduced his favourite themes—"Jesus and the resurrection." Every where he gloried in a crucified Master, and pointed to that Master's cross and sufferings as man's only plea for mercy and the surest evidence of the love of God. In all the recorded Discourses of the Apostles, we see peculiar prominence given to the atoning death, the rising power, and the coming kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ. Paul might state many things which would probably be new to the Bereans: apparently, too, opposed to their sentiments and contrary to their ordinary habits and pursuits; but, such was the docility and teachableness of their minds, that they were cheerfully contented to be *hearers*, not *teachers*; *learners*, not *judges*. They were assembled to get good to their souls, and to be made wise unto salvation. This was the disposition wherewith the Bereans received the word of God; and *ought not this to be* the disposition with which all persons should hear it? But, is it so? Is not, rather, the Ministry of the Gospel usually attended with little or no readiness of mind to receive it? If it were otherwise, whence is it that so few, comparatively, receive the Word, or obtain any real and enduring benefit through our public ministration of it? We preach, for example, the fall of man, his apostacy and ruin; but, who believe and feel themselves to be so fallen, "alienated from God by wicked works;" and, while destitute of a personal interest in the only Saviour, ruined and lost?—We declare the nature, the prevalence, and the consequence of sin; but, who feels its "exceeding sinfulness," and "flees from the wrath to come" as he would fly from a pile of burning buildings?—We publish "glad tidings"—tidings of great and joyous import—tidings which would honour an angel of glory to announce; but, "Who," (may we with

Isaiah ask) “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”—We assure our hearers of the transitoriness of all sublunary things, and point their hopes and expectations to a world of eternally enduring friendship, pleasure, and enjoyment; but, who ‘loosens from earth the grasp of fond desire,’ and affects that fulness of joy and those rivers of delight which are at God’s right hand for evermore? And why is this?—*why* is our Word so ineffectual? It is because our hearers have so little readiness of mind to receive it. The hearts of the generality are either as soft as water or as hard as rock. If you dip your finger into water, an impression will easily be made: the moment you withdraw your finger, the impression vanishes. You may, too, pour water upon a rock, but it all runs off; it never penetrates and fructifies the stone. In like manner, many hearers of the Word are sensibly impressed thereby, whilst others remain hardened and unmoved: but the impression of the former proves evanescent, and the latter continue still “the stony ground” whereon, sow what we will, no fruit is brought forth unto perfection.

Now, it is this too easy or too careless disposition which we wish to correct. In order to your due attention and improvement, suffer me to remark, that as certainly as the *preaching of the Word* is a weighty and important charge, so surely does the *hearing of it* involve a very solemn responsibility. People too commonly imagine the delivery of a Sermon to be *a matter of course*; and consequently, the hearing of a Sermon becomes also a matter of course. They have little idea that they *themselves* are spoken to in it, and that Almighty God sends, by his Ministers’ instrumentality, a message unto them individually. Hence, our Word is heard, and heard, it may be, with somewhat of a grate-

ful feeling ; but almost immediately, and without any painful reluctance, it is forgotten. No “honest and good heart” receives it. It finds no lodgement in a memory sanctified and rendered quickly tenacious of spiritual ideas. It is not recollected and digested in the thoughtful seriousness of the mind. It vibrates with the Preacher’s voice upon the ear, and with the Preacher’s voice it dies away.^a We fear the Word is gone from many hearers’ minds ere the threshold of the Church-door is passed. Is this to ‘receive with meek heart and due reverence God’s holy Word?’ Is it treating the accredited ‘Messengers, Watchmen, and Stewards of the Lord’ with becoming honour and respect? Does it not rather indicate a mind all-unready for the reception of Divine Truth? Can there be in such hearers of the Word the disposition and attention of the Bereans? “Judge your own selves.” Do as these noble-minded persons did : hear impartially ; hear teachably ; hear with readiness to *receive* ; hear for your edification in the faith of Jesus Christ ; hear for eternity ; hear as those who must one day account to the Lord and Master of our Assemblies for all the privileges and means of instruction so graciously vouchsafed unto you.

From considering The *attention* shewn by the Bereans to the ministry of St. Paul, we come to consider

II. The *conduct* they were induced to adopt.

They “*searched the Scriptures daily*,” in order to see whether the things affirmed by Paul were really so or not. The Scriptures which the Bereans possessed were

^a Ezek. xxxiii. 30—33.

merely the Writings of Moses and the Prophets. From them, however, they had learned that God would, sooner or later, “break the Serpent’s head,” that is, destroy the power of Satan, by some mysterious individual emphatically denominated, “*The Seed of the Woman.*”^a They knew also that God would, in due time, raise up unto them, among their brethren, a Prophet that should, like their great Lawgiver, Moses, found and promulgate a new dispensation of grace and mercy :^b that “in his love and in his pity he would redeem them,” and that he would do so by a far more signal deliverance than either their redemption from Egypt or from Babylon :^c that unto them a child should be given and a son be born, whose name should be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace :^d that this Prince or Messiah should be cut off, but, not for himself :^e that on the third day after his decease, he should rise again :^f that notwithstanding all the opposition of men and devils in combination to prevent it, he should yet reign as the anointed King of Zion ;^g have a people to serve and honour him ;^h and whilst exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and thence to appear again with power and great glory, there should be given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him.ⁱ They could find, too, in their Scriptures God’s recorded promise to create the heart anew ; to succour the tempted and to save the humble person ;^j to call his servants by a *new* name ;^k to send preachers of his Word abroad into the remotest parts of the earth ;^l to pour out

^a Gen. iii. 15.^b Deut. xviii. 15.^c Jer. xxxi. 31, &c.^d Isa. ix. 6.^e Dan. ix. 26.^f Hos. vi. 2.^g Psalm ii. 6.^h Psalm cx. 2, 3.ⁱ Dan. vii. 14.^j Isa. lix. 19.^k Isa. lxii. 2.^l Dan. xii. 4.

his Spirit upon all flesh ;^a to create all things anew, and once again to restore order, harmony, friendliness, and beauty, throughout the visible creation.^b These things the Bereans knew, and therefore they “searched the Scriptures” to see how far and in what respects the statements of St. Paul accorded with the written Word of God. Nor did they indolently do so : so cautious were they about receiving what they heard, and so desirous that whatever they received should be strictly analogous to the Truth, that they searched the Scriptures “daily.” They heard the Word and it was their wisdom to be assured of its Divine original, and ultimate design. Using, with lowliness and sincerity, the only infallible Means of information, that blessed promise which their sweet Psalmist records, was fulfilled to them—“*The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way.*”^c So true it is, “They that will *do the will* of God, shall know *of the doctrine*, whether it be of God.”^d

Now here I cannot but say, “Go ye and do likewise.” Here is an example of earnest and devout enquiry worthy of our closest imitation. Paul and Silas were inspired by the Holy Ghost to teach what they advanced, and were, consequently, preserved from error in their communication of the Gospel : And yet the Bereans searched the written Scriptures, and that sedulously, to see whether Paul’s Word agreed with God’s Word, and the things he spake were accordant with scriptural verity. Much more, then, ought ye to pursue this conduct. *We* come, indeed, duly authorized and commissioned to preach the Gospel unto you : but we can boast no *extraordinary* inspiration, and therefore we

^a Joel ii. 28.

^b Isa. xi. 5—9. lxv. 17.

^c Psalm xxv. 9.

^d John viii. 17.

may err. Bring then what you hear from us to your Bible. In addition to the Scriptures of the old Testament, you have the Scriptures of the New. These together form that “testimony” to which the Bible’s Author himself directs you to refer.^a Then, when we tell you, as we plainly and unhesitatingly do, that you are all, without exception, fallen, sinful, unholy creatures; search the Scriptures for the truth of our assertion.^b When we say that carnal ungodly men—the “wise in their own conceits,” the worldly, the “high-minded, and the lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;” need not go to hell *to be* condemned, because they “*are* condemned already;” see if it be so or not.^c When, moreover, we require in you a great moral and spiritual change—a change so great and absolutely necessary, that without it you can neither “joy in God” and delight yourselves in Him on earth, nor be admitted into the immediate presence of the Lord in glory; search and enquire whether a word more authoritative than our’s says not the same thing.^d When we insist on the necessity of repentance, and such a repentance, too, as shall be inducive of unfeigned faith in the Gospel and an entire change of outward conduct; look and see if He in whose Name we speak requires not the same penitence, and faith, and love.^e When, too, we tell you that Christ is “all in all”—a sinner’s justification and salvation; take not our word for it: Search the Scriptures, and see if it be not written there as with a sunbeam, that *nothing*, NOTHING, but the worthiness of the slaughtered Lamb, can give us a title to life and happiness.^f When we affirm

^a Isa. viii. 20. ^b Gen. vi. 5. Jer. xvii. 9. Gal. v. 19—21.

^c John iii. 18. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. ^d John iii. 1—7.

^e Joel ii. 12, 13. Luke xiii. 3. Acts iii. 19.

^f Acts iv. 12. 2 Cor. v. 21. Gal. ii. 21.

that holiness—personal holiness, conformity of mind and conversation with the mind and Word of God, as that alone which can evidence a justified state, and fit the sinner for Heaven, is necessary ; let your Bible determine our position.^a When we assure you that there is in the cross of Jesus Christ an atonement for sin of vast and illimitable sufficiency and worth—that in the bleeding wounds of Him who suffered on it, the contrite soul may find repose and comfort :—that peace of conscience ; hope, yea, assurance of hope ; motive to obedience ; joy in sorrow ; life in death, and triumph in eternity, are all derivable from a Saviour's blood and righteousness ; why, heed not what “ certain lewd fellows of the baser sort ” may say, but enquire and see for yourselves whether these things be so or not.^b And when all our teaching comes sanctioned and enforced by the tremendous verities of an hereafter reckoning, and we solemnly declare that if lost, the soul must remain lost and undone for ever, and that it is only by a cordial and practical reception of the Word of God, it can be saved from guilt and condemnation ; why, surely, methinks you should not but search the written Records of inspiration and carefully enquire how far our assertions accord with them. Then SEARCH them : nor do so reluctantly, as though it were a labour or a task to do so, but diligently, and that “ daily,” and as if your everlasting *all* depended on your right apprehension and belief of the truth. Let me ask—If you received a letter from a dear and distant friend, would it lie long unopened by you ? If *you* could not read it, would you not be desirous that some one should read it to you ? And if there

^a Heb. xii. 14. Jam. ii. 14—26.

^b Rom. xv. 13. Eph. ii. 14. John xiv. 27.

chanced to be in it “some things hard to be understood,” would you not, if it were in your power to do so, ask somebody to explain them to you? You know you would. How should this, then, shame and confound many of us when we think of our neglected Bible! Therein we have many letters—letters of unspeakable value—letters filled with “exceeding great and precious promises”—and these letters come to us from our soul’s eternal and unchangeable Friend; and yet, O yet, how coldly do we receive them! how negligently do we read them! how commonly do we slight and forget their sayings! Much of the holy Scriptures might be *heard* by many who could not, perhaps, *read* them for themselves: but, alas! how many Ministers read the Word of God in almost empty Churches, rather than to listening multitudes of attentive hearers. And when we are ready and willing (according to the ability our Lord hath given us, and so far as we ourselves are taught) to answer the enquiry, “*What is Truth?*” how many will ask a hundred questions about comparative trifles, rather than say as the Jailer at Philippi said—“*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” Then would you know whether the things we affirm be agreeable to the Scriptures or no; “Search” them; and that not merely on a Sunday, as though our religion and our search after religious truth, were to be confined to the walls of the Church and to the hours of the Sabbath; but “daily.” The Bereans “searched the Scriptures daily:” this was the conduct they adopted: do you pursue the same. Say not, ‘We have no time:’ Have you no time to loiter? no time to talk idly? no time to read other books?—find time to read the Word of God. Remember, *that* alone is truth which will endure a Scriptural test. It is Scripture too that will try our principles and conduct

in the judgment of the great day. "The words which I have spoken, the same shall judge you," says the Lord. Then see to it whether these things be so ; nor rest satisfied without a well-grounded persuasion of the reality of your religion and the safety of your state.

Such was the *conduct* which the hearers of Paul adopted : and it now only remains for us to notice

III. The *result* of their calm and dispassionate enquiry.

"Therefore many of them believed." "Also," we are informed "of honourable women who were Greeks, that believed, and of men not a few." Delightful effect of honest and impartial enquiry ! This is well worthy of our particular attention. Some persons say to us, ' We cannot give ourselves faith : The Word of itself cannot profit us : How many hear the things you preach to whom they do no good whatever.' True ; but the Word is in our power to use : we may hear and read and search it, if we please. And hearing, reading, and searching the Scriptures is a *means of faith*, and it is in the *use*, not in the *neglect* of means, that God communicates the grace of faith. We allow, with regret, many do hear the things which we affirm, to whose spiritual good they apparently avail little or nothing ; but, how can they reasonably expect to profit ? there is within them no readiness of mind to receive the truths we preach, nor any disposition or inclination to search the Scriptures whether the things we state be really so or not. The rule of inspiration is, "*Comparing spiritual things with spiritual ;*" and from a comparison of one with another to become "fully persuaded in our own mind" concerning every thing which the

Word of God reveals, inculcates, and requires. Bearing too in mind “the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End” of all revelation—searching in the field of Scripture for the hid treasure of Christian knowledge, and willing every where to find the gracious and almighty Friend and Saviour of our souls, the Scriptures will prove their ability to make us wise unto salvation. “The power of the Highest will rest upon us”—“open to us the Scriptures,” and “open also our understandings to understand the Scriptures.” Hence our spiritual life will be sustained and perfected on the fulness, the richness, the preciousness, of the Word of God. Unhappily, ignorant and pernicious prejudices are entertained by some persons against the Truth. They know it not, nor do they care to know it: they believe it not, nor do they care to believe it. Unkindly rumours, it may be, reach them concerning the Gospel and the Gospel’s professors, and immediately, without any thing like the liberal and prudent enquiry of the Bereans, they are offended. Like the Jews and others at Thessalonica, they are pre-disposed against the truth. If they hear it, they hear it suspiciously; and having no readiness of mind to receive it, they condemn it without further solicitude or concern about it. *Because* our manner is to “reason out of the Scriptures” and to maintain with constancy the needs-be for Christ’s humiliation, sufferings, resurrection, intercession, and re-appearing in order to the judgment of anti-Christ, and the triumphant establishment of his kingdom, *therefore* “an uproar is raised;” the “decrees of Cæsar” are declared to be impugned, and the ministry of the Gospel is vilified and contemned. But, does conduct such as this become any who professedly assume the name and character of Christian? How different was the conduct of the noble-minded Bereans! We see

them attending their synagogue; hearing with respectful deference the things affirmed by Paul; treasuring them carefully in their memories; returning to their homes—not quarrelling with the *matter* of what they had just heard or with the *manner* of its announcement (for Paul tells us that *his* “*bodily presence was*”—*inelegant*, we may suppose;—“*weak and contemptible*”—he calls it) not abusing the Apostle as a “setter forth of strange doctrines;” not hardening their heart and closing their eyes against the Truth—but examining all they had received by the written Word, and that daily with much anxiety and carefulness. The effect which, as it were, necessarily resulted from such pleasing and impartial conduct was—“*many of them believed,*” and “*therefore*” believed, inasmuch as they used the proper and legitimate means of belief. Thus while the enemies of the Lord and of his Christ, were hardened in sin and confirmed in unbelief, the Bereans became humble, holy, happy, and devoted followers of the Lamb. Nor can we doubt but the same means, used with the same openness to conviction and readiness to receive the Word, would produce the same effect at any time and in any place. We should believe *indeed* did we but search the Scriptures daily, in God’s appointed way, in meekness, and with readiness of mind. There would then be something more than mere assent to the Truth among our hearers. There would be a spiritual perception of it; a personal interest in it; a sweet and grateful enjoyment of it. Our hearers would not be “*forgetful* hearers:” and hearing under the powerful and efficient “unction of the Holy One,” their faith would increase, and ripen gradually into a full and entire credence of *all* the Bible’s verities. The prayer of Jesus Christ would be answered in the believers of his Gospel—“Sanctify them through thy Truth; thy

Word is Truth:" and "having its many and precious promises, you would cleanse yourselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God." O that thus it might be! We would not, Beloved, I again repeat, that "your faith should stand in the word of man, but in the Word of God." Man is weak and fallible: God "cannot lie." Examine then the things ye hear. Wisdom is promised to them that search for it. If ye haply find "the Wisdom which cometh from above," it will demonstrate its own peculiar excellence. The mockeries of the fool, the arguments of the infidel, the sneers of the worldling, will not move you. Like the Eternal's Friend, you will be "strong in faith, giving glory to God." "Haters of God" and "despisers" of his Truth, there were in the Apostles' days: "A Seed of evil doers" there still exists, and *will* exist till the Lord shall consume them with the brightness of his coming. Care not, however, for their "revilings." You are expressly told that "*revilers* shall not inherit the kingdom of God." In that kingdom they shall not molest you. "Consort," whilst here, "with them that believe," and part with your life rather than with "the Truth as it is in Jesus." Let its sacred depository be dear to you. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this Book, and keep those things which are written therein." (Rev. i. 3.) This the Spirit saith of one portion of the holy Volume in particular; but doubtless it may be said with equal propriety of every other. And herein you observe a union betwixt *hearing*, *reading*, and *keeping* the sayings of God's Book. If you hear without reading, or hear and read without keeping them, you will hear and read in vain and to little purpose. It is when our Word fails of any practical effect—fails to induce your search of the Scriptures—fails to further

within you the joy of faith, the patience of hope, and the labour of love, that our “strength is spent for nought and in vain.” Our desire and prayer for you, therefore, is, that you may receive the Word with all readiness of mind; search the Scriptures daily whether the things you hear be agreeable to them, and assure us of your cordial reception of the Truth we teach by your “walking before the Lord in all pleasing.”

Having considered the three things we proposed, viz. The attention shewn by the Bereans to the ministry of St. Paul, The conduct they were induced to adopt, and The result of their calm and dispassionate enquiry; there is only one closing OBSERVATION that I will beg to make:—

See wherein true nobility consists. The Bereans were “*more noble* than those of Thessalonica:” and wherefore? Because they heard, received, and searched the Word of God, and became humble believers and professors of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, religion by some persons is deemed to be very proper for poor or illiterate people; just as though religion did not become people of birth or of education. So far, however, is religion from being a mark of a low or of an ignorant mind, the wonder is how any one possessing plain common sense, can choose to be otherwise than religious. It is faith in the Bible and an experimental acquaintance with its truths, that allies us to “the mighty God,” ennobles and refines our capacities, and fits us for an eternity of glory. It is quite erroneous to suppose that circumstances of a mere temporal or adventitious kind—such as wealth, honour, influence, and the like—constitute true nobility. There is a *nobleness of soul*, which nothing of an earthly kind can possibly bestow. We

must be "*born of the Spirit ;*" we must possess that "*wisdom whose fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold, and whose revenue than choice silver :*" we must "*seek the honour which cometh of God only ;*" we must "*deny ourselves*" and "*bring our body into subjection,*" in order to be truly great and noble. "To the poor," as being a privilege of a peculiarly gracious kind, "the Gospel is preached." And by whom the Gospel is most readily *received* too, Paul tells you in 1 Cor. i. 26 :—but the wise, the rich, the mighty, are not hereby excluded. Soon will every human distinction vanish. "The fashion of this world passeth away." Where, eventually, will be our superiority to others? No superiority will remain but what the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ will confer. The names of all his people shall be found—though not, it may be, blazoned in the annals of this world's fame, yet—"written in the Book of Life." No deeds of valour, no splendid exploits, may have been wrought by them, nor ever been reported with their titles around the listening earth ; but to have subdued the kingdom of darkness ; to have conquered self ; to have wrought righteousness ; to have fought the good fight of faith, and to have walked humbly with their God, will make their memorial blessed for ever, and be their distinguishing honour and renown when the most illustrious trophies and the proudest eulogiums of this world shall be lost in forgetfulness and silence. A poor but pious follower of the Lamb may live unnoticed and die unregretted : no assiduous friends may watch around his suffering couch ; no human being may mark the ebbing of his life away, nor sculptured stone point out his body's resting place : but, celestial spirits invisibly watch over him, and his Lord will not forget to raise *him* up at the last day. Learned he might not be : but if he received the Word with readiness ; if he

searched the Scriptures, and through faith in Christ Jesus became wise unto salvation; all-inferior to his wisdom will be the knowledge which mere worldly science can impart. Then, my poorer Brethren, be contented with your lot. If ye be willing to receive the Truth, and will be careful to adorn it, yours' will be the noblest Father, the noblest patrimony, the noblest state, and the noblest name. Jesus, your Lord, when he became Immanuel, "became poor." He, too, was "despised and rejected of men." Great, however, and good, and holy was he in his lowest and most degraded condition: and now that the sorrows and griefs of his humiliation are passed away, he dwells on high and will eventually reign "the Prince of the Kings of the Earth." He has "riches unsearchable,"—honours and rewards eternal, to bestow upon his faithful servants. To you is "the Word of this salvation sent:" receive it only, and it shall ennoble you for ever, and with the glories of your Redeemer's advent and kingdom in view, you will not, I am sure, be slow to say, "I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ and be found in him."

Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it!

SERMON XXVI.

PUBLIC WORSHIP: HOW USUALLY ATTENDED.

GENESIS XXVIII. 16, 17.

And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.

THERE is something so mysteriously sublime, so affectingly impressive, in the necessary existence, the exalted nature, the moral character, and the infinitely glorious attributes of God; that, in every place, where it pleases him to record his Name and to manifest his presence, a solemn awe must fill the soul of every really devout and enlightened worshipper. “How dreadful is this place!” exclaimed the patriarch Jacob, when a sense of the Divine presence and majesty came upon him.

Jacob had recently quitted his father, Isaac’s, dwelling: He was now on his way to Haran: As he journeyed, he lighted, we are informed, on a certain place

and tarried there all night, because the sun was set. Jacob made the ground his couch and a stone his pillow. In dreams and visions of the night, he seemed to see a ladder set up upon the earth, the top of which reached unto heaven. Thereon the angels of God, as the Patriarch's ministering and guardian spirits, were ascending and descending, whilst above and beyond them stood Jehovah. And the Lord said unto Jacob, "I am the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee, in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again to this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."—"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep," awed, we may easily conceive, by this scene of commingled grandeur, sovereignty, condescension, and benignity. And he said, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." And then, from a perception, doubtless, of the Lord's glory and a recollection of his own unworthiness, "Jacob was afraid, and he said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven." In grateful memorial of the Divine goodness and the mercies so graciously promised to himself and to his posterity, the Patriarch "rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And he called the name of that place, Beth-el," which is, being interpreted, *The House of God*.

Now, my Beloved Brethren, the presence of God

is not confined to the place where Jacob lay, nor is the pillar which Jacob consecrated the only memorial of the Lord's majesty and mercy. "The Lord is in *this* place; *this* is none other but the House of God, and *this* is the Gate of Heaven."—True; you will perhaps reply: God is in every place: and therefore God is here. Allowedly, God is in every place: "the heavens are his throne, and the earth is his footstool;" and "Where," he himself enquires, "Where is the House that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath my hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord." Can Immensity be circumscribed? Can One that is above all and in all and through all, dwell in houses made with hands? No: surely not. Nevertheless, God is peculiarly and especially present with some persons in some places. In Eden, while it remained a garden of innocence and pleasure, "the Lord God walked with man," and most probably in a form visible and apparent to the senses of our first Parents. With Abraham, in the plains of Mamre, "the Lord talked as a man talketh to his friend;" and on one occasion we are expressly told, "*the Lord went up* when he had left communing with Abraham;" and wherefore should this be stated if the Lord did not *visibly* ascend into the heavens of his glory?—He dwelt visibly also amongst the Israelites, first in the Tabernacle of Moses, and afterwards in the more sumptuous and magnificent Temple of Solomon. We are sure, he was once personally present among men in the Man Christ Jesus, and still is he spiritually the same wheresoever "two or three are gathered together in his Name." The Lord has his Day, his House, his Word, his Ministers. "As a Spirit"—wonderful in counsel; fearful in praises; glorious in holiness; and almighty in power—he requires to be "wor-

shipped in spirit and in truth," by all that professedly supplicate his throne. His throne is indeed "a throne of grace:" the blood of atonement precedes our approaches to it; but yet is that throne "high and glorious;" and He that sits thereon will be served "with reverence and godly fear." "I will be sanctified," he says, "in them that come nigh me." But, allow me to ask, *is* he so sanctified? *Is* this the mode of worship which obtains among the millions of mankind who 'call and profess themselves Christians?' *Do* they come to the House of God with a holy dread upon their minds? *Do* they enter this Gate of Heaven awed by the presence of the Lord within it? *Can* they truly say, The Lord is in this place and we *know* it?

That you may not deem our interrogations needless, or say that our judgment of our fellow-men is uncharitable, I will appeal to yourselves, and in the prosecution of my subject, I will ask you these two questions: FIRST, *How do persons usually attend the House of God?* and SECONDLY, *How ought they to come thither?*

FIRST, I ask you, *How do persons usually attend the House of God?*

We should imagine that when the hour of Prayer arrived—and the bell, tolling its appointed summons, tells us that the House of God is opened and the Gate of Heaven unfolded for our assembling, and the purposes of Christian worship, we should all, with the utmost care, prepare to meet our God, and aim to "come up to his holy hill and to his dwelling" with befitting solemnity. We should suppose that one and all of us would be saying—"I am coming before the holy Lord God: I am about to approach the footstool of the King immortal; His eye will discern my most

latent purposes : If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me : He will not be mocked with impunity : My professed worship must be expressive of my feelings, and my praises of my gratitude. Where-with shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? Who shall mediate between us ? And what Days-man shall lay his hand upon us both, as partaking at once of the Divine and the Human natures ? What atoning blood shall bespeak me favour, and sprinkle my heart from an evil conscience ? What odorous incense shall mingle with my service, and procure it acceptance in the holiest of all ? Who shall help my infirmities ? What are the wants of my soul ? Is it my determined purpose not to let the Angel of the eternal Covenant depart until he bless me ? Will this earthly Palace of my God lead me in desire and expectation forward to the Jerusalem that is above—the House which human hands made not, and where Jehovah sits enthroned in awful grandeur and in dazzling holiness ? Feel I a wish, a warm and fervent wish, to ascend by Jesus Christ, the Ladder symbolized in Jacob's vision, into the heavens ; to pass the celestial portals, and to bow with adoring reverence before the throne as one among the hosts of the redeemed ? Were it now said to me, “ Come up hither,” am I ready ? Is my soul arrayed in the garment of Salvation, and prepared in recollectedness and love to sing the hymn of, “ Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ ?” Am I awaiting the new Jerusalem state ? and have I ground to hope I shall be one of the great and innumerable multitude that shall surround the glorified and triumphant Jesus in the morning of the millennial day ?—With consideration and care similar somewhat to this should we doubtless obey a summons to some noble or princely dwelling-place :

but, do we come to “the courts of the house of our God” with any thing like this considerate carefulness? O Beloved, I would we did. But, if people do not come thus, in what way do they come? Appealing, remember, to yourselves, I ask, do they not come *thoughtlessly, prayerlessly, faithlessly*?

Do they not come *thoughtlessly*? Sobriety of mind and gravity of deportment are repeatedly enjoined in Scripture.—For example, Titus ii. 2—6. These ought at all times to mark the Christian character: How much more should they do so when we come to the House of God, and appear in the more immediate presence of the Lord of hosts! But, alas! may we not fear that few, very few, when they attend the public ordinances of religion have any sober and becoming thoughts of the great and glorious object of all religious homage and adoration? Do they bring before the Lord the one availing Sacrifice for sin? Do they think through whose merits and mediation alone they can be favourably regarded and mercifully accepted?—A Jew presumed not to appear before God without a sacrifice: how many a Christian, so called, ventures to come before Him without any believing regard to Christ, “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” People consider not that God can be gracious only in his Son. Usually, too, they will be found ignorant of their spiritual necessities: and though they say, ‘O come, let us worship and fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker;’ yet do they not fall down before Him; nay, rather, they are too lofty in their imaginations to *kneel at all* in the Divine presence, and their worship is such that God might well ask, “Who hath required this at your hands?” and say to such careless worshippers, “Bring no more vain oblations.” The ear may listen to another’s voice, and the lips may re-

peat the language of another's prayer, but where is the heart? Where is that thoughtful recollectedness without which all our devotion is pretence and mockery? Most truly might many say, when the services of the Church are over, "The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not." And whence arises this painful circumstance? People do not recollect themselves. From worldly concerns or family cares, they rush at once into the House of God. No solemn pause precedes their entry into the Gate of Heaven. "Very greatly to be feared," is Jehovah: but no fear of his awful majesty rests upon their minds. "To be had in reverence of all that are round about Him," is the Lord Almighty: but how often does a wandering eye, a listless apathy, and even a composure of all the powers to sleep, betray a mind void, totally void, of reverence and godly fear! —Brethren; "examine yourselves:" See whether ye be clear in this matter: See whether you yourselves are so thoughtful, so serious, so devout in heart and spirit, as ye should desire to be when you come to the House of God and to the Gate of Heaven.

But, I ask, moreover, Do not people usually attend *prayerlessly*? We say not that all could come from kneeling in their closets to kneel again in Church: but, may we not fear, many do not who could do so? Were we expectantly going to the Court of some human Potentate either to render homage or to supplicate a favour, how many enquiries, how much anxiety, what studious recollection of our errand, would doubtless pass within us! But where are the enquiries, where is the anxiety, where the studious recollection of many persons before they enter the house of God and approach the throne of grace? Alas! their hearts are prayerless. Their souls do not go forth to God in fervent and affectionate desire to realize and to enjoy his pre-

sence : they pray not for his Spirit's outpouring : for the lightening down of the Almighty's arm in the midst of the assembled worshippers in order to the prevalence and success of the Gospel ; for the humiliation of the proud heart and the consolation of the humble one ; for the detection of error in the deceived, and the reception of truth among enquirers, for the destruction in fine of every idol-god, and the exclusive exaltation of " the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." " For these things will I be enquired of, saith the Lord, to do them for you." People enquire not for them, and therefore they are not done. And as no heartfelt prayer precedes their visit to the House of God, so no spirit of prayer passes with them through its gate, or marks the resumption of their wonted sittings in it. What a pretence to devotion is the momentary covering of the face by many with the hat or hand ! How unlike is it to the veiling of the cherubic faces in the Temple where the Lord of Hosts sitteth upon a Throne high and lifted up ! Does this act, in the generality of our attendants, indicate the engagement of the heart in confidential fellowship with God ?—Instead of prayer for the Divine presence, assistance, and blessing ; ought not many a one to be praying on his entry into the House of God, for the pardon of his late, hurried, and heedless attendance there ? Can we wonder that the minds of many are distracted by vain and worldly thoughts during the solemnities of worship ? Is it surprising that the Sabbath is a weariness to them, and that their souls remain unblessed and unrefreshed by all its means and mercies ? Here again, my Brethren, pause and examine yourselves. Ye are now gathered within the walls of your Church : Did you before you came here pray to the God of grace and love to bless you ? Did ye come hither prayerfully ? Looked ye to your

feet, and were ye more ready to hear than to offer the sacrifice of fools? Did ye walk as friends to the House of God, taking sweet counsel together? *Feel* you that the Lord is in this place? *Know* ye him to be so? And is it in your heart to say, with adoring and admiring wonder, like the pilgrim Jacob, “How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven!” Enquire and see whether it be with prayer and supplication that *ye* come before the Lord.

But I have further to ask, Do not people usually come *faithlessly*? Of some we read, “The word preached did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith* in them that heard it:” and of the Israelites when they were arrived at the very borders of the promised Land, we are told, “they could not enter in *because of unbelief*.” And why does not the word preached profit many that hear it now? For precisely the same reason—“not being mixed with faith in them that hear it.” And why, when so many come to these earthly Sanctuaries of our God, do they not enter his celestial Courts and worship in “the holiest of all?”—“because of unbelief.” It is proved to many, as evidently almost as light is distinguishable from darkness, that they are **WRONG**—that if they live and die in their present unchanged state, they must inevitably perish—that whoever may be the children of God, they are not—that whoever may know and value the true medium of communication between Heaven and earth, they do not; and yet, notwithstanding all their knowledge and conviction, they continue, through their faithlessness, unhumbled still. Sometimes, it may be, they feel somewhat of the power of Divine Truth, and for a season are apprehensive of wrath and danger: but it is only for a season, just as when the faithless among the armies of

Israel saw the earth open and swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, they trembled and were afraid; and on the morning of the very next day, became as faithless and careless as before.^a If the Word of God be really believed, the belief of it will be influential on the heart and conduct. If, too, prayer be really sincere, the petitioner will not be contented without an answer to his supplications. Do not indifference about the recollection of the Word and unconcern about the acceptance and vouchsafement of prayer, argue a lamentable faithlessness of heart? Can we assure ourselves that the generality of our hearers hear with the readiness of the noble-minded Bereans to receive the testimony of God? Is it possible for us to find it in those who can voluntarily smile or sleep in the House of God, and while God's sovereign and eternal Majesty is being invoked, worshipped, and adored? Prove your own selves in this particular.^b Have ye faith? Is your confidence chastened with humility? Is your belief maintained in vigorous and lively exercise when you come to appear before the Lord in Zion? Come ye prepared to hear—"not the word of man, but the word of God?" Do its great truths fill you with solemnity and seriousness? Do ye "tremble" at them?^c Do they really profit you, and, mingled with faith in your heart, do they nourish your spiritual being, and fill your souls with fervour and desire to behold the glory of God in the new and everlasting habitations of the heavenly world? Enquire ye, and "be not faithless, but believing."

I think, then, you will admit with me that people usually come thoughtlessly, prayerlessly, and faithlessly to the House of God. And though all are certainly not alike thoughtless, prayerless, and faithless, yet

^a Num. xvi. 34—41.

^b 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

^c Isaiah lxvi. 2.

would all do well to enquire how far they fall short in these things, and how much nearer they might approach the spirit of good old Jacob's words—"How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven."

Having asked you How people usually do attend the House of God, I proceed to ask you

SECONDLY, *How ought they to come thither?*

And how? In a way directly the reverse of that in which they too generally do attend. Ought they not to come with *thought*, with *prayer*, with *faith*?

And (1.) With *thought*? "How long," says God, "shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Such is the infirmity and weakness of our nature, that "vain thoughts" will ever and anon be springing up within us: but the Lord would not that we should harbour them—would not that they should find a *lodgement* in our heart. And if at no time they should find a lodgement there, much less should they do so when we join in the public services of our Faith, and come before the presence of our God. On an occasion so interesting and so solemn, ought our mind to be "as water spilt upon the ground, that cannot be gathered up again?" Ought it not rather to be held in quiet recollectedness? Should not a people say when coming before the Lord, 'Tarry, O world; tarry, our families; tarry, every earthly thing and care—tarry here, while I go yonder and worship.' Should not our spiritual state; our various wants; our already vastly accumulated obligations to Divine favour; and our entire dependence on the freeness, the fulness, and the perpetuity of that favour be considered? Should not the grandeur, the holiness,

the faithfulness of God ; the person, the work, the death, the intercession, and the coming of Jesus Christ ; the gracious condescension, the forbearing kindness, and the unfailing love of the Spirit—all, by turn, engage our thoughts when we visit the house of prayer ? Distressing, truly, is the heedlessness of many. Take care then that ye attend as ye ought. Think whom you are about to address, and wait recollectedly for the loving-kindness of the Lord in the midst of his Temple.

But (2.) Should not people come with *prayer* ? “ My house,” says God, “ shall be called a House of Prayer.” It is where two or three are gathered together in his name, that he promises his especial presence : and again he says unto us, “ If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them.” Then ought we not to assemble ourselves before the Lord prayerfully ? Alas ! we fear too many in our congregations scarcely know what prayer is. A person may *say* prayers, and that for many years of his life, and yet not *pray* all the while. There may be an attendance on Means and a devout posture of body in their use, and yet the heart at the same time may remain cold, unaffected, averse to God, and unconscious, totally unconscious, of any grateful communion with him ? We find Prayer denominated in Scripture, “ crying,” “ calling,” “ pleading,” “ wrestling,” “ groaning ;” all which terms imply much fervour of spirit, almost unutterable desires, and real importunity with God. Jacob wrestling with the Angel—the Angel, doubtless, of the everlasting Covenant ; that is, the Lord Jesus Christ)—on his return from Haran ;^a Nehemiah before king Artaxerxes ;^b Peter when fearfully sinking in the waters of Tiberias ;^c the Publican

^a Gen. xxxii. 24—32.

^b Chap. ii. 4.

^c Matt. xiv. 30.

when, abased and humbled, he cried, “God, be merciful to me a sinner ;”^a the Thief when, amid the agonies of death, he cried, “Lord, remember me ;”^b are all remarkable and illustrative examples of “effectual fervent prayer.” Then, “after this manner pray ye.” If the House of God be the House of prayer, ought ye not to come within its gates prayerfully disposed? When it is said, “Ask, and ye shall receive ;” ought we not to ask a vouchsafement of the Divine presence? ought we not to ask “an unction from the Holy One,” wherewith empowered the Word may prove an arrow of conviction unto some, and a message of consolation unto others?—“I beseech thee, said Moses, shew me thy glory :” And God shewed him His “goodness” plenteously. “O God,” said David, “thou art my God ; early will I seek thee : my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is ; to see thy power and glory, so as I have seen thee in the Sanctuary ;” and whilst he thus “panted after God as the hart after the water-brook,” and meditated thus ardently upon Him, David’s soul was “satisfied as with marrow and fatness.” Know ye what this meaneth? See ye that in like manner ought *our* souls to thirst after God? Then come before him with prayer—prayer for the manifestation of his glory to your hearts in the face of Jesus Christ : prayer for the ingathering of his Church : prayer that the “Hosanna” of our children may increasingly abound, and the “Halleluia” of their fathers be ceaselessly repeated. If ye see and admit that people ought to come in the spirit of prayer to the house of God, take care that you yourselves come after this manner. Be prepared to add a sincere Amen to the rich and comprehensive prayers of your Church :

^a Luke xviii. 13.^b Luke xxiii. 42.

so shall the sure mercies of the Lord enrich, refresh, and bless you. Pardon ; peace ; succour ; comfort ; victory ; triumph ; glory ; yea, “*WHATSOEVER ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.*”

And lastly, ought not people to come with *faith* to the Mercy-seat ? “ Without faith it is impossible to please God :” for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is—that he *exists*, in order to come to him ; and that God is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, *in order to encourage his coming to him*. It is as faith is in lively and vigorous exercise that God is apprehended and felt to be really present. It is by faith we embrace the proffered mercies of the Gospel. The Atonement of Jesus Christ is received by faith. His righteousness is “ the righteousness of faith :” by faith we therewith clothe our souls, as we attire our bodies in their usual habiliments with our hand. And it is when we ask in prayer for particular things, *believing that we have them*, that we receive them. Unless, therefore, people attend their Church with faith, their prayers will be formal and listless : their expectations few ; their desires low and grovelling ; and the Word they hear will profit them little or nothing. We walk and live by faith. Ought not, then, persons to attend the public worship of Almighty God under a realizing sense of spiritual and eternal things ? Ought they not, at least, to *endeavour* to do so ? Ought not the believer’s prevailing wish to be breathed in the holy Psalmist’s language—“ One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple ?”—Ought these things so to be ? Allow ye their propriety ? *Know* ye these things ? Then, “ happy are ye if ye *do* them !” And may ye be found to be “ of

those who *believe* to the saving of the soul !” It is clear that with thought, and prayer, and faith, people ought to come to the House of God. And now I have asked you how usually they *do* come and also how they *ought* to come, I cannot close without suggesting one or two obvious REMARKS :—

And 1. *See the true reason why many profit so little from their Means of grace.* Many express surprise that they cannot attend their Means with more profit than they do : their minds wander ; their memories are bad ; they cannot retain what they hear ; and so on. But, we apprehend, their surprise would cease, in some good measure, if they would only consider the manner in which they attend worship. Where is their thoughtfulness ?—their prayerfulness ?—their faithfulness ? What sense have they of the Lord’s presence and glory ? Where is their fear, their reverential and filial fear, of their heavenly Father ? Where is their desire to “ see Jesus ?”—where the simplicity of their faith in Him ? Alas ! where ? “ The Lord is in this place, and they know it not.” “ This is the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven ;” but they feel not “ how dreadful is this place.” No previous private prayer prepared the heart for social worship. Their spirit made no diligent search, and hence the soul’s necessities are not known. Worldliness was dominant, and now eternal realities recede from view. The brief time of public duty passes away, and such characters go from the courts of the Lord, unsatisfied, unrefreshed, unblessed. Is it not so, Brethren ? Is there no one amongst you whose experience corroborates what I say ? Then see the *true* reason why many profit so little from their Means. Let me not, however, leave you discouraged : I would remark

2. *How abundantly you might profit by a more thoughtful, prayerful, and faithful use of your Means.* Only “stir up the gift that is in you,” and exercise yourselves in thought, in prayer, and faith, and your “profiting shall appear unto all.” The Spirit will fulfil his two-fold work, bring all things to your remembrance which you have already heard, and shew you, moreover, things to come. You shall feed upon the plenteousness of your Father’s House, and “drink of his pleasures as of a river” of unfailing and ever-satisfying goodness. Herewith you may “prove” the Lord, and see “if He will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” “*All*” that you may ask ; “*above* all ;” “*abundantly* above all ;” yea, “*exceeding* abundantly above all that you can either ask or think,” will the Lord do for his praying believing servants. With all “spiritual blessings” hath he blessed us in heavenly things in Christ Jesus : “Ask and receive, that your joy may be full.” Love your “Beth-el.” Remember God is here. Come hither and be continually rearing another and a still more grateful “Ebenezer” as a memorial of the abounding mercies both vouchsafed and promised to you. If “the Lord loveth the gates of Zion,” do you also love them : if he loves them “*more* than all the dwellings of Jacob,” do you love them rather than any place beside.—If the Lord for his majesty and holiness be “very greatly to be feared ;” O do you pause ere you approach his footstool ; and be solicitous, earnestly solicitous, to worship him “in spirit and in truth.” Forget not the only Mediator. It is “upon the Son of man that angels now ascend and descend ;” and he is the only Mediator between ourselves and God. No man cometh unto the Father but by him : no man can pass the gate of the

heavenly city but in his name. It is in him God "hath sent redemption unto his people:" it is in him "God hath commanded his covenant for ever." May ye hallow and revere his sanctuary; come henceforward before him thoughtfully, prayerfully, believingly; be abundantly blessed in the use of your appointed Means, and eventually be made "pillars in the temple of your God," to go out again no more for ever!

Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON XXVII.

FAMILY WORSHIP: ITS PROPRIETY AND UTILITY.

GENESIS XVIII. 19.

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Do you, my Brethren, read the Word of God and pray in your families? I repeat the question; *Do you read the Word of God and pray in your families?* Though not specified with particularity in the sacred Scriptures, Family Worship is, nevertheless, universally acknowledged and implied in them. Favourable, truly, is the testimony which the great Searcher of hearts bears to the character and conduct of Abraham in this respect. “The father of the faithful,” and “the friend of God” are the honourable appellations by which Abraham is distinguished. Justified himself; blessed with a sweet consciousness of the Divine favour, and happy in the way of the Lord, Abraham was solicitous that the

spiritual good which he personally enjoyed should be shared by every member of his household, and be perpetuated also among his children from one generation to another. To assure to them as far as human authority and parental influence could do, the promises of God when his grey heirs should have been brought down with gladness to the grave; the venerable man “commanded his children and his household after him.” And since, agreeably to the testimony of St. Paul, in Gal. iii. 7, “they that are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham,” it behoves me to exhort you, “if ye be Abraham’s seed, that ye do the works of your father.” That you may, then, command *your* children and *your* households after you, and that *they* may keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, and that the Lord may bring upon *you* that which he hath promised—let me be favoured with your serious attention, while I endeavour simply to shew you,

I. The *obligation* we are under to maintain the Worship of God in our families:

II. The *advantages* derivable from so doing:

And III. The *excuses* made for neglecting it.

I would shew you

I. *The OBLIGATION we are under to maintain the Worship of God in our families.*

And here we will first of all observe that Family Worship is *reasonable in itself*. Shall the father of a human family be respected in his person, acknowledged in his authority, and loved for his paternal kindness; and shall the one common Father of all, the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of mankind, and the God of all our mercies, remain unrespected, unacknowledged,

unloved? Is it reasonable that we avow our gratitude for mercies of a national and a personal kind, and not for those of a social or a family kind? Shall monuments be reared to the memories of our earthly fathers, friends, and deliverers; and shall we forbear to rear an altar to the name of our God and Saviour? As “our reasonable service,” I think we are obligated for a family’s mercies, to offer up a family’s worship.

But this argument for the reasonableness of Divine Worship in our families, receives additional strength when we consider that there is not, it is believed, a people upon earth, however uncivilized, rude, and ignorant, who do not acknowledge some Supreme Being, or a Power superior to themselves, on whom they are dependent, whose anger it is their interest to deprecate, and whose favour it would be their mercy to obtain. Hence, how universally prevalent are sacrifices, and how common, too, among the heathen, are household deities. Surely, then, with our purer faith, our more enlightened views, and greater civilization, it ill becomes us to neglect the worship of Almighty God in our domestic circles. With our multiplied privileges, I conceive we are proportionally obligated to acknowledge the bounteous and merciful Bestower of them all.

Moreover, Family Worship comes recommended to us by many *scriptural Examples*. Joshua’s well known determination was—“As for me *and my house*, we will serve the Lord.” When David had brought the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Obed-edom, and set it in the midst of the tent which he had pitched for it, he “returned to *bless his house*.” Job, fearing lest his sons in the unchecked gaiety of their hearts, should blaspheme the Lord, “rose up early in the morning and offered sacrifices for them all,” and “*thus did Job continually*.” Cornelius was “a devout man—one that

feared God *with all his house*, and prayed to God alway." We read of the Saviour's praying *with* his disciples as well as for them, and often did he privately instruct them. We read, too, of "*the Church that is in Nymphas' house*" and of "*the Church in Philemon's house*;" to the one of which Paul sends a friendly salutation, and to the other wishes "grace and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Now these Churches were none other than 'congregations of faithful men'—*households*, in which the worship of God was maintained. And if we are to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and above all, of our Lord and Saviour, I think we cannot but feel under a solemn and positive obligation to worship God amidst our domestics and children.

But, let us a little more particularly contemplate the patriarch Abraham's commanding his children and his household after him. The family piety of this good man obtains the approval and commendation of Jehovah himself—a commendation that appears very clearly to indicate the mind of God concerning Family Worship. We see here, as it were, the finger of the eternal Father himself, pointing us to this illustrious example of domestic piety; and whoso hath ears to hear may hear him saying, "Go and do thou likewise." Wherever Abraham's earthly dwelling-place was fixed, there he built an altar unto the Lord. He did so in the plains of Mamre: he did so again when he removed to a mountain on the east of Beth-el.^a Daily, doubtless, did he instruct his children in the altar's mystic rites, and direct the attention of his household to THE LAMB which he knew the Lord would in after ages provide

^a Gen. xii. 7, 8.

himself for a burnt-offering.^a The advent of Jesus Christ was indeed to Abraham “as a morning spread upon the mountains,” mixed as yet with gloom, and only dawning; but “he saw it and was glad.”^b “The way of the Lord” was to pass by the iniquity of his servant; to forgive freely and to save gratuitously; and all with reference to a SEED that should be born to Abraham, and a Covenant of peace made with him in that mysterious Seed. Abraham was savingly acquainted with this great Truth; and “justice and judgment” were the necessary fruits of his faith. Hence, He to whom all hearts are open, and the most secret springs of human action are discernible, testified of his servant—“I know him, that he *will* command his children and his household after him:” and thus commanded, “they,” like their great Progenitor before them, “*shall* keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment,” saith the Lord. Prayer and instruction in Abraham’s family went hand in hand together. Most significantly were they owned and blessed; and now is this example of family religion before us, stamped with the approving sanction of Almighty God. Are we, then, under no obligation to maintain the same? How can we possibly be “the children of faithful Abraham,” if we walk not in our Father’s footsteps? Abraham’s faith will lead to Abraham’s practice: and vain will be all our pretences to piety if there be not an harmonious union betwixt our belief and conduct. It is “with ALL prayer,”—that is, with *all manner* of prayer; *domestic* as well as public and private—believers are exhorted to “pray alway.”^c “Prayer” is to be made for the glory and universal triumph of our Saviour-God “*continually*,” and “*daily* (it is prophetically declared) shall he be

^a Gen. xxii. 8.

^b John viii. 56.

^c Eph. vi. 18.

praised.”^a If “all the families of the Earth are *to be* eventually blessed in him ;” surely all those families of the Earth that *are* already blessed in him, should deem it their honour and their privilege to serve and worship him. If *day by day*, we are taught to ask our daily bread ; surely it is implied that day by day we are under ever continually increasing obligation to adore and thank the Faithful Donor of our food. If man be born rude and untractable as “a wild ass’s colt :”^b if “foolishness be bound up in the heart of a child,”^c and “as soon as we are born, we go astray and speak lies ;”^d why, then it becomes the imperative duty of the Masters, the Parents, and the Elders of our families to instruct their children and dependents in “the way of the Lord,” and all the saving truths of God’s revealed will. And indeed unless *they* will care for the moral and religious welfare of their households, no others can effectually help them. Sabbath and other Schools are intended to further, not to supersede parental culture. A solemn responsibility attaches to parental and magisterial authority. Used with prudence, it becomes a mighty engine of good : neglected or abused, a fearful consequence results from it. The souls of children and of servants are providentially committed to our care : In “the nurture and admonition of the Lord” are we required to bring them up : this it is scarcely possible to do without regular and constant daily devotion in the family. Every father or master should be the priest of his own household : every household should know its fixed and determined seasons for the gathering of its members around the footstool of mercy ; and every member of every household should

^a Psalm lxxii. 15.

^b Job xi. 12.

^c Prov. xxii. 15.

^d Psalm lviii. 3.

be instructed in the nature, the use, the efficacy, and the value of Christ's atoning sacrifice, and taught that "without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin; and unless, as Abraham was, we be "justified by faith," we shall never be justified with God at all. O Beloved, let these sayings sink down into your ears. Be it remembered that we have all a Master in Heaven—a Master to whom we must all one day account for our several and respective talents; and awful is that saying we find written in Jeremiah x. and 25, "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and *upon the families that call not upon thy Name.*" Methinks this Scripture, added to our foregoing remarks, obliges us, in a manner the most solemn and impressive, to maintain the Worship of God in our houses. "The families that call not upon God's Name," are herein ranked with "the heathen that know him not:" and upon them equally will the Almighty "pour out"—*pour* out, as a ruinous and desolating torrent, his just and holy displeasure. *Equally*, did I say? would he do so: Nay; shall it not be *more tolerable* for the heathen and their families in the Day of Judgment, than for many who live like heathens in a Christian land. Let us, then, consider this: and henceforward let "thanksgiving and the voice of melody," reading of the Word and prayer, be heard and practised in all our habitations.

I hope you will be still further encouraged to adopt the plain and obvious duty of Family Worship, while I shew you

II. *The ADVANTAGES derivable from so doing—*

These are, I believe, incalculably great. It would far exceed the time usually allotted to our public exer-

cises, were we very particularly to enumerate them or to dilate upon them. We must, therefore, briefly notice those of the most striking and important kind.

The continuance and prevalence of Piety in our families, is, in a good measure, assured by Family Worship. Instruction given to the young and dependent members of a family, in a kind, familiar, and condescending manner, is seldom, perhaps never, wholly given in vain. In several successive generations, we see the beneficial effects of Abraham's commanding his children and his household after him. Observe in Genesis xxiv. how beautifully the fear and love of God shone forth in the character of his elder servant. Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, were all men of God: they kept "the way of the Lord and did justice and judgment." Failures and infirmities, indeed, marked their conduct:—(and when or where is human nature otherwise than sinful and depraved?)—but, on the whole, they were men of probity and truth. Now, would we that our children and others over whom we can exercise authority, should keep the way of the Lord, and carry onward to succeeding years and generations, the knowledge and the love of God? Let us use the *means* and we may reasonably expect the *end*. Most certainly, it is not with us to convert the souls of those committed to our charge; but, we may "teach them the good and the right way:" we may tell them they are sinners, and as such, exposed to Divine wrath while they remain careless and unconverted: we may tell them Who is the Friend and Saviour of sinners; how they may be reconciled to God, through the death of his Son; how they may become "new creatures in Christ Jesus;" how they may "fulfil all righteousness" by the Spirit's aid; be holy in desire and purpose here, and altogether so hereafter. This it is in our power to do: Obligated

we are to do it ; and with prayer for the Divine approval of our labours and blessing upon them, we may hope our families will perpetuate the knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, when our heart hath ceased to beat and our tongue to speak. On the contrary, how can we reasonably expect our successors on the stage of human conduct to tread the paths of holiness and truth, when their fathers before them trod the ways of worldliness and error ? Will they, can we hope, live *with* God and walk with him in near and sweet communion, if we live *without* him and refuse to do him homage ? Surely not : if then we would that piety should continue and prevail in the earth, let us command whom we may to worship with us the God in whom we live and move, and on whom we are all dependent for our life and breath and all things.

Family Worship, too, when prudently conducted, is attended with this advantage, *It tends to promote unity and peace in households.* A joyous and pleasant thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity : and what, under God's approving smile, will tend more effectually to produce and to preserve this unity among brethren, than the regular observance of domestic worship ? Why is it, we may be allowed to ask, *Why is it* so many are continually troubled by the misconduct and perverseness of children and dependents ? Why ! because the blessing of the Lord does not rest in its softening, hallowing, uniting, influence upon their households ; and that blessing they have not because they ask it not. Can peace be found where the Son of peace does not dwell ? Can light and love and harmony prevail where the source and spring of all heavenly affections is unheeded and unknown ? Can we be "one" in true heart's fellowship, otherwise than as we are united in Christ

Jesus? “Where envying and strife is,”—and envying and strife will commonly be found where Christ is not—“there is confusion and every evil work.” Whereas; let the holy Scriptures be daily read, and God be worshipped in a simple, humble, Christian-like manner, and this will *allay*, at least, if it do not entirely remove, those unhappy passions to which our common nature is liable, and which, more or less, are too apparent in most families. ‘I am to join in Family Worship by and by,’ is a reflection which has not unfrequently confined an unkindly feeling to the breast, prevented the utterance of a threatening word, smoothed the brow of anger, and added subsequent fervour to thanksgiving for deliverance from evil. Where can family sins be better confessed and lamented than at a family altar? Where can family sorrows be brought with more propriety before “the God of all comfort” than in a family circle? And where, in all the world, will you find that sweet union of heart—that oneness of pursuit, aim, and enjoyment—that prevailing desire of *each* to promote the happiness of the *whole*, unless it be in “an household of faith,” an household regulated by Christian rule and devoted to the service of the Lord?

Another great advantage resulting almost necessarily from the practice of Family Worship is—*The preservation of a sense of divine and spiritual things in the mind.* We are all by nature disposed to evil and indisposed to good. Children, in general, are very thoughtless and inconsiderate. Servants, too, and domestics, though commonly apt enough to acquire a knowledge of the occupations and duties pertaining to their respective callings, will yet be found slow and dull in the apprehension of religious truths and things of an intellectual kind: But the regular return of Family Worship says—(silently, indeed; but not on that account

the less effectually)—‘There is a God: There is a Being in our midst, invisible, truly, to our bodily organs, but spiritually present, and privy to all our thoughts and purposes: On this great Being are we all dependent: It is our duty to worship him: We are accountable to him for all we think, or say, or do: a world of retribution awaits our departure hence: notwithstanding, therefore, the irreligion and ungodliness of the many, there must yet be a tremendous reality in all that concerns the soul and the soul’s salvation.’ This “still small voice” it will be impossible for the most ignorant and careless members of our household not occasionally to hear. And when it is heard, incalculable good may result from it. Our worship may seem to be unheeded at the time; but seeds of truth and knowledge may be sown that shall in after years spring up and bear the fruits of righteousness. ‘My father,’ or ‘My master used to read and pray in the family where I lived when I was young,’ has more than once been a sufficient stimulus to a child or to a servant in after-life to do the same.

A further advantage derivable from Family Worship is—*The efficiency it gives to ministerial labour.* Our labour does not so effectually avail for our people’s good as, we trust, it otherwise would do, because the parents and masters of our people do not more generally follow our public ministrations with their private admonitions. Every head of a family is bound to “provide for those of his own household:” and which, with most anxiety and carefulness ought he to provision them,—things temporal or spiritual? Wherefore is he invested with authority if it be not to use and to improve the power entrusted to him? He is to “*command*” his children and his household; he is to command them “*after him*”—*himself* is to be their exemplar, and to

lead the way to the mercy-seat of the one great Lord and Master of us all. As there was a Church in the house of Nymphas and Philemon, so should there be in his house. Like Job, he should plead “continually” the merit of the death of Christ both with and for his household. From worshipping the Lord in his sanctuary, he should, like David, “return to bless his own house.” And did this conduct more generally prevail, we believe verily, Ministers would not have so often and so mournfully to ask, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” or, again, to complain, “I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought.” If our elder hearers—the Parents and Masters of our parishioners, applied to themselves what they heard; treasured it in their own hearts and memories; and made it subsequently the matter of enquiry and conversation among their children and servants, O how materially would their so doing aid and further our public ministration of the Word! And if in every household that composes the aggregate population of our parish, the voice of supplication was daily heard, the Bible daily read—its holy doctrines believed and its commands observed, and devout thanksgiving acknowledged daily the gracious and abounding mercies of the Lord, O how certainly would this tend to the prosperity of our common Christianity, and promote the interests of piety and morality amongst all parties! “*By reason of use,*” the spiritual senses of our people would acquire a nice discernment of good and evil. Our “babes in Christ” would become children; our children would become “young men;” and our young men “fathers.” Thus “all who desire the sincere milk of the Word would *grow* thereby,” and be qualified for the reception of stronger and more substantial food.

And, whatever advantage the worship and service of God in our families *failed* to produce,—our performance of a plain and acknowledged duty would bring with it its own rich reward. As in Psalm xix. 11th. verse, we read, “*IN keeping God’s commandments there is a great reward*”—a present consciousness of integrity, a present “delight in the law of God after the inward man;” and the “reward of grace” in a world of future and eternal blessedness. Abraham *commanded* his children and his household after him: they *kept* the way of the Lord; they *did* justice and judgment, and the Lord *brought* upon Abraham that which he had spoken of him. Abraham, after a life of faith and love, continued through a hundred three-score and fifteen years, gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and when he had been gathered to his fathers, “God blessed Isaac his son,” and through successive generations did the blessing of the Lord rest upon Abraham’s posterity. In like manner, if it be in our heart to say, “Now, therefore, let it please thee *to bless the house* of thy servant, that it may be before thee for ever; for I wot that he whom thou blessest is blessed:”—then may we believingly add, “*and it shall be blessed for ever.*”^a “For God is not,” says St. Paul, “unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewn towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”^b On every child of faithful Abraham the Lord will bring that which, in the fulness of

^a 1 Chron. xvii. 27.

^b Heb. vi. 10, 12.

his love towards us in Christ Jesus, he hath spoken. While the curse of the Lord shall be in the house of the wicked, he will bless the habitation of the just.^a And who can estimate the value of his blessing?

Such are some of the advantages derivable from Family Worship. I was to notice,

III. and finally, *The EXCUSES made for neglecting it.*

These, we hope, any of you who have hitherto neglected the worship of God in your families, will particularly observe; and hence perceive that the excuses which will satisfy us will not satisfy God, nor, by any means, lessen our obligation to fulfil a plain and necessary duty.

An excuse made by many for neglecting Family Worship is—*Want of ability to pray in the presence of others, or to lead a family's devotions.* We have no talents or gifts, say they, for the work: we should only expose ourselves. Now, it so happens, that this is almost the only case in which people pretend to have a very mean opinion of their own abilities. They will not uncommonly be found to entertain a very high opinion of their abilities in most other matters; but, when required to “command their children and their households after them,” O, they have no ability to do so. But, admitting you have no ability to do so, you may seek and ask it. “Lord,” said the disciples of Jesus, “teach us to pray;” and he taught them. I doubt not, however, but some of you may sincerely desire to teach your households “the way of the Lord,” and to pray with your children and domestics daily: but, you *fear* you have not ability; you want courage

^a Prov. iii. 33.

to begin ; a false shame hinders you. Now, let me ask, Does the heart pray ? Is the eye single ? Would you in simplicity and sincerity serve the Lord and benefit your families ? Would you that God should be for salvation around you and a glory in the midst of you ? Then, fear not. Hope and be undismayed. The God whom you *would* serve, does not regard “excellency of speech” or fluency of expression : He looks on the heart ; he notices purpose and desire. And if, on trial, you could *not* express your sentiments and feelings with becoming readiness and propriety, you could use a Form of prayer. There is nothing whatever objectionable in the use of a Form of Prayer, simply and scripturally worded. The language of our Liturgy, with variation where necessary, is admirably adapted to express either our wants or our acknowledgments, either our joys or our sorrows, before the Lord. “If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.” Then, a pretended want of ability cannot excuse the worship of God in our families.

Others, again, will say, *We fear being ridiculed* : we fear we shall be thought too strict and precise in our domestic habits. This excuse oftentimes has great weight with those who urge it. So many neglect Family Worship that we are necessitated to be peculiar if we adopt it. Here, however, I would observe—The irreligion of the multitude should be a powerful incentive with us to cherish religious habits and the fear of God in our houses. Look at Abraham : he stood almost the *alone* worshipper of Jehovah in a sinful world. And though all around us spurned from their dwellings every vestige of domestic piety, it affords no reason why we should do the same. Whom are we indebted to for all our mercies—man or God ? If to God, which are we

obligated to fear and worship? Is “the curse” which, as a poisonous bane, is often to be found in the house of the wicked, to be preferred to “the blessing which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it?” If you are thought peculiarly strict and precise, ought you not to be so when you recollect what a gracious and merciful Lord you serve? Do you not know that he “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a *peculiar* people, zealous of good works?” And should it not be cause of devoutest joy that we *may be* so *peculiarly* the friends and servants of Jesus Christ? “The way of the Lord” is ten thousand times more pleasurable and delightful than the way of the world. Man may frown disdainfully upon us—think it beneath him to kneel with us around our family altar—and by unkind looks and gestures may condemn our religious services: but what matters it if the Lord smile approvingly upon us, and bestow his fear, his truth, his love, and all the riches of the full assurance of his faith in answer to our prayer?—Those who make the ridicule of a fellow-worm an excuse for neglecting to command the daily attendance of their children and others under their authority, to the worship of God, would do well to consider what is written in the viiith. chapter of St. Mark, and the 38th. verse. Let me add, too, this word equally applies to those persons who, in general, it may be, have Family Worship, but when they have a friend or a stranger with them in their house, unaccustomed, as they suppose, to the service, they omit it. This betrays a fear of man, and a shame of Christ and of his words, totally unbefitting a profession of religion. What! ashamed of our God! ashamed of our relationship to “the King eternal, immortal, invisible!” ashamed of his worship! ashamed of what will constitute our “eternal excellency,” and be our

employment through everlasting ages ! O shame on our shame : Let not the fear of being ridiculed evermore excuse or prevent the worship of God in our families. The Papist shuns not the avowal of his confidence in Mary : the Mahometan will turn invariably to the east, be where and with whom he may, in honour of his false prophet : alas ! that Christians should be so slow to acknowledge and to serve their Lord.

Another excuse urged by some is,—*We have no time.* A parent or a master will often say, ‘ Myself and my household are always occupied : we are engaged in business early and late, from morning till night : we have, consequently, no time for assembling ourselves to read and pray.’ Bring this excuse to the Bible. Abraham had flocks and herds exceeding many, and very much cattle. Job, too, had the same. Joshua was the Leader and Commander of all the armies of Israel. David occupied a throne, and had all the cares of government on his mind—and yet all these fathers and heads of families, numerous as were their possessions and their concerns, found time to command their children and their households after them. Besides, if you are so exceedingly engaged in your worldly callings, you ought especially to maintain the life and power of godliness in your several and respective dwellings, in order to counteract the influence of so much worldly care on the minds of your children and others. But, have you *really* no leisure ?—none for amusement ?—none for trifling occupations ?—none for vain, giddy, and babbling visitants ?—Then, how dare you presume to say that you cannot collect your households a few minutes morning and evening for the worship and service of God ? Why give all your time to provisioning a perishing body with perishable good ? Why not give some *few* of its fleetings moments, at least, to the soul’s in-

struction and to the claim, the just and righteous claim, of a good and gracious God upon your heart, and mind, and strength, and time, and all? Would it be matter of little consequence in succeeding years for our children to know the way of the Lord, to love the paths of holiness and truth, to exercise judgment and justice, to be useful and honourable members of human society, and then “fellow-citizens” with their fathers of “the Jerusalem that is above?” Had they not better even to lose some portion of their temporal wealth or comfort, than to forego the probable advantages of domestic piety?—But, in fact, we believe a want of time for Family Worship proceeds, in most cases, from a dislike to the duty, or an improper management of time. If you appoint stated and determined seasons, which shall be found most convenient, and keep to them regularly, you will find it to be as easy to collect your family together, and as indispensable to have regular family devotion, as it is to have your daily meals. Difficulties will vanish before Christian determination. Children and servants will expect it: and there will be felt a disagreeable loss if the customary Worship happen to be omitted. Time *will* be found for it. Whatsoever may be done or left undone, God will be worshipped: and where thus worshipped amidst opposing difficulties and in a Christian spirit, God will again become “the glory of his servant’s house.”^a His smile will prosper labour, and labour will endear rest and repose in the bosom of the Divine benevolence. I am aware, those sons or servants engaged in agricultural pursuits could not always attend the *morning’s* worship: but none need be absent from the worship of the *evening*. Want of time, then,

^a Zech. xii. 7.

cannot be allowed as an excuse for not worshipping God in our families.

Sometimes we hear an excuse of this kind alleged—*Some part of my household would oppose me.* One or more of my family would dislike Family Worship; it would be a restraint on them. No well-managed child or servant would complain of a Parent's or a Master's well-exercised authority over him. The household of a *Christian* father will revere and honour him. His whole deportment will assure them that he mainly affects their good, and requires nothing of them but what will ultimately promote their happiness. Assured of this, they will need no entreaty to kneel with him at a throne of grace, nor will they turn away from Him who speaketh to them in His Word from heaven. Should you, however, be unhappily opposed by any member of your household, and one or more should slight the worship of God in your family's devotions,—still maintain your authority; “command” obedience to your wish, and, however opposed, be firmly resolved that as for you and your house, you *will* serve the Lord. Give nothing up that concerns your duty. Be determined in your care of the immortal souls which compose your household. At the same time, “be pitiful.” Perhaps it is your own fault, in part, that your children and dependents are not more respectfully subservient and obedient to you. Think *Who* can make them all that they should be. Seek for them as well as for yourself “the kingdom of God and his righteousness:” Do so “believing verily” that all other things, needful to your happiness, shall be given to you with the kingdom and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Then with holy David shall you say, “I will sing of mercy and judgment, unto thee, O Lord, will I sing:” and be enabled in the strength of

the Lord to add, “ I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”

A final excuse we shall notice is this—*Fear of personal restraint*. This excuse, if we mistake not, lies at the root of almost every other. Let the heart be examined, and many a one will find there—‘ I am fearful of a restraint upon myself : I am afraid if I have daily Family Worship in my house, I shall not be able to indulge myself and enjoy the world as I am disposed to do : more will be expected from me then, than is expected now : I must be consistent : if I say, *Hallowed be thy Name* ; I must not take the name of God in vain : if I read, *Swear not at all* ; I must not swear myself : if I tell my children and my servants to *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*, they must not see their father and their master living in the habitual profanation of it : if I tell them to do justice and judgment, I must not be otherwise than just and true myself : if I command my children and my household after me, I ought to precede them in the way and to lead them to the due fulfilment of every relative and Christian duty : this I am not disposed to do, and therefore it excuses my neglect of Family Worship.’ Now, this we do not suppose to be often spoken in so many words : but is it not too often the language of the heart ? And if it be, think what a mark this is of a man’s spiritual state ! How does it evince a most lamentable hardness of heart and contempt of God’s word and commandment ! How does it countenance the world’s forgetfulness of its Maker, and say to the many families who are glad to excuse their negligence, “ What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have, if we pray to him ?”—And how may this impediment to domestic piety be removed ? By becoming ourselves what we wish our households should be. Let us “ acquaint our-

selves with God." Let us pray him to make known unto us his "way"—to "make his way plain before our face," and to enable us to walk steadily and consistently therein. "Wait on the Lord : be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart : wait, I say, on the Lord." He can effect our deliverance from every thing that hinders the prevalence of piety in our own hearts and amongst those committed to our charge. He can bring us into a "glorious liberty" of thought and action. He can make our houses "Beth-els," and the daily worship of himself the sweetest and most grateful employment of our lives. "And behold, says God, I stand at the door and knock : if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Trusting now that your *excuses* for neglecting Family Worship are invalidated and silenced ; that you are desirous, too, of the *advantages* derivable from it, and convinced of the *obligation* you are under to maintain it, I come, in conclusion, to RECOMMEND ITS ADOPTION TO YOU.

From *this day* let God be worshipped in your families. O my People, think how pained your Minister must feel as he goes out and in among you, and passes by now here, now there, and yonder another, of your dwellings, where the voice of praise and supplication never sounds—where mercy is never invoked and thanks are never given. Do you not see how greatly pained and discouraged we must feel ? Whereas, how pleased and comforted should we be, were we assured that in all your dwellings there was reared an altar to our common Lord ! Then, O ye who hitherto have neglected—I will not say this *duty* merely, but this high and enno-

bling *privilege*—neglect it now no longer. Masters and parents, give unto your servants and children that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master and a Parent in heaven. Believe yourselves bound by solemn obligation to conduct your families' worship. Let your children grow up habituated to the service. When you engage your servants, let it form a part of your stipulation with them that they shall be at home at your seasons of devotion, and attend those seasons orderly. Let the Word of God be daily read in your houses. If practicable, let "a Psalm, or Hymn, or Spiritual Song," sometimes enliven your worship. And close with Prayer. Pray, as I have said, with a Form of prayer, if you cannot pray without one. Use whatever helps you need rather than be prayerless households. Let a few moments recollection always, if possible, precede your engagement in family duty. It is a good plan previously to meditate on some portion of holy Scripture: while you thus muse, the fire will kindle, and at the last you will speak with your tongue. What comes warm from *your* heart will warm the hearts of others: what affects *you*, will affect them. Jesus will appear in your midst and say, "Peace be to this house." He will bring on you that which he hath spoken. He will pour on you his holy Spirit. "The savour of his knowledge" shall be diffused, and the Lord of grace and mercy will be glorified in you. So shall ye hasten the new heaven and the new earth's creation. The holy city shall be seen coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and angels in the mightiness of their strength shall say, "BEHOLD, *the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God.*"

O that ye, to whom I speak, may come with the predicted many that shall be gathered from the east and from the west; from the north and from the south, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the holy, triumphant, and everlasting kingdom of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ!

The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and the patient waiting for of Christ!

SERMON XXVIII.

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ.

1 CHRONICLES IV. 10.

And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.

AMONG the many things written in holy Scripture for our admonition and instruction, there are several remarkable instances of the acceptableness and prevalence of fervent prayer recorded. Abraham interceded six times for the cities of the Plain, and was answered after each renewal of his petition.^a Jacob wrestled in prayer with the Angel-Jehovah for a blessing, and the wrestling Jacob became the prevailing Israel.^b Hezekiah, under sore affliction, prayed for the prolongation of his life, and fifteen years were added to the days of the

^a Gen. xviii. 23.

^b Ib. xxxii. 28.

years of his pilgrimage.^a Hannah, whose peculiar portion was a praying spirit, asked a son : a son was given to her.^b Jehoshaphat, the pious king of Judah, when his dominions were invaded by the Ammonites and others, summoned his nobles, his people, and even mothers with their little ones, about him : solemnly placed both himself and them under the Divine protection, and prayed for succour and deliverance : wonderfully was he both succoured and delivered.^c Daniel prayed for the restoration of his brethren from captivity : “whiles he was yet speaking in prayer,” an answer was vouchsafed to him.^d When Peter was confined and even bound with chains within his prison-walls, prayer procured him freedom and enlargement.^e Nor less remarkable than those just specified, was the Prayer of Jabez. Who Jabez was—from whom descended or to whom related, we cannot positively determine. We learn only from the verse immediately preceding our text, that he was an *honourable* man, and *more* honourable than his brethren ; and that his Mother called him *Jabez* because she bare him in *sorrow* : giving her child a name corresponding with the circumstances of the family. In what respects Jabez was more honourable than his brethren, or on what grounds his birth was so sorrowfully commemorated by his Mother, we are not informed. This, however, we certainly know—and this is what we are chiefly concerned to know relative to this honourable man—“*Jabez called on the God of Israel.*” The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, was the glorious object of his religious confidence and regard. No graven image won the homage of Jabez : he poured out his requests to no

^a 2 Kings xx. 2.

^b 1 Sam. i. 11—20.

^c 2 Chron. xx. whole ch.

^d Ch. ix. 20.

^e Acts xvi. 5—16.

dumb and powerless idol. A child of grief, he knew the one gracious and merciful Refuge of the distressed and afflicted soul. Possibly the calamities which had befallen himself or family, had tended to increase and deepen the ardour of his piety. Importunity in prayer is a touch-stone whereby all pretences to religion may be very surely tried. It is well when the heart feels unutterable things. In the prayer of Jabez, more seems to have been felt than words could easily express. There is a depth and a pathos in it which, I fear, few of us, favoured as we are with clearer Revelations of God's will and more abundant means of grace than Jabez was, experience or enjoy in our approaches to the Mercy-seat. "*Oh,*" says he, "*that thou wouldst bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand may be with me, and that thou wouldst keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me !*" And large as his petitions were, full and comprehensive as were his desires, "*God granted him that which he requested.*"

Now, without insisting particularly on the necessity, the duty, and importance of private personal Prayer; I mean easily and simply to notice, FIRST, *The Prayer before us*, and SECONDLY, *Our encouragement to pray the same.*

In noticing

FIRST, *The Prayer before us*,

We shall mark its several petitions as they occur and follow each other in succession. And, first, in calling upon Israel's God, Jabez says, "*Oh, that thou wouldst bless me indeed !*"—Very striking is the ardour of expression contained in these few words ! "*Bless me :*" "*Bless me :*" "*Bless me indeed :*" "*Oh, that thou wouldst bless me :*" and "*Oh ! that thou wouldst*

“bless me indeed.” This good man perceived a worth in the blessing of God infinitely surpassing all his earthly honour and pre-eminence. For this he pants. His soul goes forth in unspeakable desire to possess it. ‘Oh! that I might be blessed: Oh! that I might be blessed indeed: Oh! that I might see the felicity of God’s chosen, and triumph with them in the fruition of their hope.’ Thus Jabez prayed. Honourable he was, and more honourable than his brethren;—affluent, we may suppose, in worldly circumstances, and placed amidst the smiles and caresses of those who called on the God of Israel: but, would this alone delight and satisfy him? no: “the honour which cometh of man,” Jabez felt to be a trivial and an unsubstantial thing: he therefore sighed for “the honour which cometh of God.” Man blessed him and respected him: but calling upon the Lord, he says, “Oh! that THOU wouldest bless me.” Nor can *we*, my Brethren, too sedulously seek, too importunately ask, the blessing of Almighty God. We may conceive ourselves to be “rich and increased with goods:” we may be honourable among our fellow-men: many may regard our presence, our influence, and authority, with respectful deference: but all these are adventitious things: the most worthless of our kind may possess them equally with ourselves, and all the while the blessing of the Highest may not be graciously upon us. And what if God be angry with us? What if he do not look in mercy upon our souls? His blessing alone maketh *truly* rich. It is as he blesseth us that our way will be prosperous. We must be blessed of him to be really great and good. Ought we not then to ask and seek that we may receive and find God’s blessing? Let us cry, “Oh! that thou wouldest bless me:” and again, “*Bless me, even me also, O my Father!*” We may be

assured that our Heavenly Father hath not "one" blessing merely, but many blessings to bestow on the children of his love. "*With all spiritual blessings* are we blessed in Christ Jesus:" Surely, then, we should not with *less* importunity than Jabez beg the Lord to bless us: and "I wot that whom HE blesseth, is blessed." Blessed "indeed" shall we be: blessed in our down-sitting and our up-rising; blessed in our basket and our store; blessed in the city and in the field; blessed in our going out and our coming in; the Lord will open to us his good treasure, and we shall be blessed in the experience of his abundant grace; we shall be above only and shall not be beneath: yea, the Lord will establish us an holy people to himself, as he has covenanted with us in our Surety, and all people of the earth shall see that we are called by the Name of the Lord, and are those whom *the Lord hath blessed*.

Jabez next prays for "the enlargement of his coast." What he particularly means by this petition, we do not exactly know. It might possibly relate to territory, and Jabez might pray this prayer for the more convenient accommodation of his dependents, and his flocks and herds. This had occurred before to Abraham. Be this, however, as it may, without by any means wresting the sacred text, we may understand it to mean an *enlargement of heart*, or an increase of devotional affection towards God, and a more enlarged capacity to receive and to retain the Divine blessing. There is a correspondency of experience in the saints of every age. "One and the self-same Spirit" works that experience, and although it may be very various in its joys and sorrows, its hopes and fears, yet is its origin and its end the same. Though not in his *God*, Jabez might feel "straitened" in *himself*, as many a servant of the Lord does now. Well befitting such a state is the peti-

tion, "Enlarge my coast." And who of us all does not need to present this petition before the Lord? Who of us all does not need more grace whereby more feelingly and experimentally to enter into the meaning of Isaiah's beautiful expression—"The desire of our soul is to thy Name and to the remembrance of thee?"^a Even when our soul's desire is God-ward, and we *do* remember Him, how restrained and hindered do we often feel! how bounded are our views! how confined our wishes! how low and few our hopes! Well therefore does it behove us to ask "a more abundant entrance" into the faith, the hope, and the love of "the common salvation." God commended Solomon's choice of wisdom, rather than of silver and gold, reputation and honour; and gave him, in answer to his prayer, much "*largeness of heart.*"^b If, then, any of us lack wisdom, let us ask it of God.^c Let us pray for still deeper and more humbling views of our native sinfulness: let us ask for still clearer and more exhilarating views of Jesus Christ, and the Saviour's suitability to the sinner's necessity: let us beg for brighter, more vivid, and more realizing perceptions of unseen realities: let us seek to be alive to the exigencies of our times, and to the unfoldings of the roll of prophecy: let us, in fine, adopt the words which say,

"Give me the enlarg'd desire
And open, Lord, my soul;
Thy own fulness to require,
And comprehend the whole.

Stretch my faith's capacity,
Wider and yet wider still;
Then with all that is in thee,
My raptur'd spirit fill."

For this did Paul bow his knees unto the Father of our

^a Isaiah xxvi. 8.

^b 1 Kings iii. 9, and iv. 29.

^c James i. 5.

Lord Jesus Christ, and this with holy fervour did he supplicate for his beloved Ephesian converts.^a In this way, also, may our coast be immeasurably enlarged. We “have a goodly heritage:” let us not be contented to tarry on its borders. Much yet remains to be possessed: let us go up and possess it. We are well able when our Almighty Lord is our Guide and Guardian. None may dispute our right to what he gives us; and when he says—“To you will I give this land,” we may confidently pray the prayer of Jabez, “Enlarge my coast.”

The third petition which Jabez preferred was, “And that thine hand may be with me.” *Hand* in the language of Scripture has a great variety of meanings. Where it occurs, the context will usually determine its proper signification. Here, as in numerous other parts of the sacred Volume, it imports the sovereign power and strength of the Lord—or, perhaps, the union of his goodness and ability to succour and befriend the soul that serves him. Jabez, doubtless, felt himself to be *in himself* a weak and helpless creature:—(and who that is “taught of God” does not do so?)—he therefore made not gold his confidence, nor confided in the multitude of his riches. “I will not trust in my bow,” might he think; “neither shall my sword save me.” “I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,” is God’s gracious promise to his believing child: and gratefully might Jabez say, “Thy right hand shall save *me*.” And better shall we find it to put our trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in man, or in creature-counsels. We can only be secure in Divine protection. It is when “the Lord God of Israel fights for Israel,” that Israel alone can prevail. He that blesses and enlarges the praying soul, must maintain its

^a Eph. iii. 14—19.

life, recruit its strength, supply its wants, cheer its hopes, and eventually terminate its conflicts in victory and triumph. How earnestly then should we implore “the good hand of our God upon us!” It is only as his hand is upon us that we can prosper. Of the isles it is said—“On mine arm shall they lean:” and may we not cherish the most simple and entire dependence on the mighty arm of the Lord? Is it shortened that it cannot save? Does it not sustain “as a very little thing” the mountains and the hills of the earth? Does it not hold the sun and the moon and the stars in their courses? Does it not uphold the inhabitants of the eternal world in their blessed allegiance to their Lord? Will it not bind the powers of darkness with chains they shall not sever? Hath it not ever continually from the beginning sustained the weakness and preserved the soul of the believer?^a Hid in the hollow of Jehovah’s hand, can any pluck us thence?^b In all times of our tribulation may we pray, “Let thine hand help me.” In the hour of nature’s dissolution, may we cry, “Into thy hand I commend my spirit.” And as our spirit wings its upward flight, cheerfully may we sing, “The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly: the right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly!”^c And when *He* shall re-appear, whom we desire and long to see, His own arm will bring salvation to His people, and set the crown of resurrection-glory upon our present mortality and corruptibility.

Jabez goes on, finally, to add, “And that thou wouldest keep me from evil that it may not grieve me.” *Evil* applies to sin; to suffering as the consequence of sin; and to the evil one through whose temptation we have sinned. Our nature is depraved; our heart is de-

^a Deut. xxxiii. 27.^b John x. 28.^c Psalm cxviii. 15, 16.

ceitful ; and through our depravity and self-deception, wealth, honour, and human applause, become snares to us. What should have been for our profit, tends to our hurt. To this Jabez might feel himself particularly exposed. He knew that he could not keep himself—that his own resolutions and endeavours were not alone sufficient to deliver him from evil or the grief it would occasion him. His petition therefore is, “ Oh ! that THOU wouldest keep me.” He wished the *Lord* to keep him : to keep him lowly and contrite in the days of outward comfort, and to be himself his shield and buckler in seasons of spiritual conflict. He wanted that view of the Divine perfections which would assure him that all things, however apparently opposed to his good, should ultimately prove beneficial to him. Hence, he would not “ sorrow without hope,” nor be “ greatly moved” amidst the adverse changes and perturbations of human affairs. And who can deliver *us* from evil that it grieve us not, but the God of Jabez ? Though we may be blessed, and enlarged, and protected, yet who of us all is not liable to temptation, to sorrow, to personal sickness, and to bereavements of various and distressing kinds ? Would we then from all these seeming evils see the hand of the Lord adducing good ? Would we be delivered from the sinful passions and desires that too surely lodge within us ? Would we tread upon the power and maliciousness of that evil one who as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour ? Would we that the venom of sin should be extracted, and the nature of temporal calamity be changed ? Would we be secure in times of wealth and resigned in times of trouble ? Let us pray our covenant-God in Christ to keep us. It is only the Lord that can safely do so ; and he can so keep us from evil that it shall not grieve us. “ The Lord, it is declared, will deliver his

servant in the day of evil.” “There shall no evil happen to him,” but, through the grace of our Lord, it shall be overruled for his good. Every humble follower of Jesus may go on his way, saying as he goes, “I will fear no evil, for thou art with me:” and no sooner will he have reached the gates of the heavenly city, but “sorrow and sighing shall flee away,” and he shall be filled with joy and gladness. God will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. Satan’s utmost hate need not grieve us while we can truly say, “My Beloved is mine, and I am his; I know in whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.” Blessed with a *Saviour’s* help; assured of a *Saviour’s* love; and kept by a *Saviour’s* power, we may “rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer.” “Who is he that condemneth, since it is *Christ* that died?” “Who shall separate us from the love of God”—since that love the floods of our ungodliness could not quench? The promise of Him who keepeth Israel with ceaseless and ever wakeful watchfulness is—“I, the Lord, do keep it: I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.” We may surely, then, believe that “if any hurt a praying follower of Jesus, they hurt the apple of Jehovah’s eye,” and hence we gather how confidently we may ask him to “keep us from evil that it may not grieve us.”

Such was the Prayer of Jabez: And from noticing its several petitions, we proceed to state,

SECONDLY, *Our encouragement to pray the same.*

“And God granted Jabez that which he requested”—say the concluding words of our text. God blessed him, and blessed him indeed; God enlarged his coast;

God mightily defended him; God kept him from evil so that it did not grieve him: and does not the vouchsafement of Jabez's prayer encourage us to pray the same? Does it not shew us,

1. *That God heareth prayer?* Great and glorious as the God of Israel is, yet does he bow down a listening ear to the voice of human supplication. The cry of distress he especially heeds. A "Jabez"—"a child of sorrow," may every son and daughter of fallen Adam be denominated. When sensible of our wretchedness, we "pour out our complaints before the Lord and shew him of our trouble," "he heareth us." He heard the intercession of Abraham for the cities of the Plain. He permitted Jacob to prevail and to obtain the blessing which he so passionately desired. He listened to the sore mourning of Hezekiah and commissioned a Prophet to assure him that his prayer was heard. He marked the silent movement of Hannah's lips, and fulfilled her heart's desire. Jehoshaphat he enabled to put to flight an Alien's armies through prayer. Daniel was heard in the "beginning of his supplication," and an angel of swiftest wing came down to say, "Thy prayer is heard." Prayer won the ear and moved the hand of high Omnipotence to bring Peter through bars and gates of iron, and to set him in the midst of praying brethren. Jabez called on God and all that he requested was vouchsafed to him. And is it not a delightful truth that the God of Jabez, the God of all the worthies we have just enumerated, is OUR God? that happily we are not worshippers of a god which having eyes seeth not, and having ears heareth not? Disclaiming all other lords, we acknowledge the one true and eternal Lord. Him we honour as God our Father, God our Saviour, and God our Sanctifier. We find in him our best Friend, our mightiest Protector, our most sympathizing Bro-

ther (Prov. xviii. 24.) His favour, consciously possessed, forms our happiness now, and is the pledge of richer joys to come. We believe him to be acquainted with all our ways and wants and cares. “*He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?*” He that created the soul, with all its faculties—all its sensibilities and powers, shall not he know, perceive, and feel? How encouraged, then, should we be to pray unto the Lord our God! “Hear us, O our God,” should we say;^a and rest in the assured persuasion, “My God will hear me.”^b “This is the confidence we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”^c For, does not the prayer of Jabez shew us, moreover,

2. *That God answereth prayer?* Mark the several petitions of the prayer we have expounded, and see how signally, how readily, how graciously, they were answered. Is it asked, ‘How know you, whether our prayers be heard or not?’ I answer; “*We know that God heareth us,*” because “*we know that we have the things petitioned for.*” No angel, indeed, nor prophet, is sent to say that our prayers are heard: but, a consciousness of their acceptance and vouchsafement pervades our mind—a *consciousness*, the reality of which no praying man can doubt. The Divine Nature is “without variableness or shadow of turning:” if God was yesterday gracious to the souls that sought him, he is the same to-day, and will be so for ever. If with complacency and delight he listened to the prayer of Jabez and granted him that which he requested,

^a Neh. iv. 4.

^b Mic. vii. 7.

^c 1 John v. 14, 15.

he will listen with equal complacency and delight to the voice of our supplication. He pardoneth, he justifieth, he consoleth, he saveth, the man of prayer. Abundantly beyond all that we can think or ask, he doeth for us. Jesus—not with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with his own blood, is entered into the holy place, that is, into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. The promise runs, “Ask what ye will and it shall be done for you :” and, therefore, “*When I call upon thee,*” may the Believer say, “*thou wilt answer me.*” We call not upon a Baal, saying, “O Baal, hear us ;” and where then can be “neither voice nor any to answer us ;” but we call on “the God of Israel”—a God who mercifully declares, “Before they call, I will answer : and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”^a “Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”^b

But does not the Prayer of Jabez encourage us to hope, 3. *That God will grant us that which we request of him ?* When the holy Spirit brings the soul into near and endearing communion with its reconciled Father in Christ, that question seems to meet us in our approaches to him, “*What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee ?*” or that permission, “*Ask what I shall give thee.*” Wouldest thou be blessed ? wouldest thou thy coast should be enlarged ? wouldest thou that my hand should be with thee ? and that no evil should grieve thee ? “Ask and you shall receive.” When my designs were hid in dark and shadowy rites, Jabez prayed and I granted him that which he requested : Can you imagine me to be less gracious now that my

^a 1 Kings xviii. 26. Isa. lxxv. 24.

^b Heb. iv. 16.

designs are ripened into effect and deed?—O how should this encourage us “by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make known our requests unto God!” He is the Lord, and changes not. His goodness is a shoreless, fathomless ocean, and faileth not. The “wonders which he doeth” and hath ever done “for the children of men” flow from it. Our emergencies are as great and our enemies as numerous as were those of Jabez. His blessing alone can refresh and satisfy us. It is only where he commandeth his *blessing*, that there is “life for ever more.” All will be desolate sterility where *that* is not found. Our nature is equally depraved and weak with that of Jabez: the world is still as it ever was since the first transgression, the enemy of truth and godliness: the same dangers attend on wealth and honour as attended them in the days of Jabez; and Satan is as powerful and malicious now as when Jabez lived below: unless therefore “the hand of the Lord be with us,” we shall fail in warring a successful warfare, and consequently shall fail also of the conqueror’s crown. The God of Israel only can counteract the nature of evil and keep us composed and cheerful amidst conflict, alarm, and sorrow. Let us ask him to do so. Numerous, truly, our wants and weaknesses may be—numerous almost as the moments that make up our days and years; but the tender mercies of our God are numberless. “All things are your’s;” but “for them I will be enquired of, saith the Lord, to do them for you.” “And whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, it shall be done for you.” Deep then soever and comprehensive as our requests may be, we are encouraged to hope that our God will grant them.

Having now contemplated the Prayer of Jabez, and

seen our encouragement to pray the same: I would ADDRESS,

1. *Any among you who may live prayerlessly.*

But is it possible for any persons born in a Christian land, favoured with Christian Sabbaths, Means, and Ministers, and calling themselves Christians, to *live without prayer*? O yes, very possible. Fact too certainly proves that thousands do so. To multitudes you might say, ‘Do you exercise public or private prayer?’ and they would be constrained to answer, ‘No.’ Put the question only to your neighbours, and you will soon be painfully convinced that we have not a few baptized heathens amongst us. Now, my Brethren, no words are sufficiently strong to express the danger of a prayerless state. Prayer is the vital breath of the “new creature in Christ Jesus;” and that man who does not find it in his heart to pray has not yet begun spiritually to exist. And where there is no spiritual existence, the soul must be wholly in bondage to corruption and enslaved by sense and sin. Remaining in this state, it must be lost for ever. No sooner, however, are we born again and “alive unto God”—no sooner are we conscious of our sinfulness and aware of our desert, but there will be a cry for mercy. When sensibly condemned in ourselves, we shall value a Saviour’s righteousness. Feeling our helplessness, we shall be saying, “Oh! that thou wouldest keep me and that thine hand may be with me.” Where this is all unknown and all unfelt, there reigns “the darkness of the shadow of death.” Hear this, ye prayerless ones! “O that mine head were waters and my eyes fountains of tears, that I might weep day and night,” while ye weep not for yourselves. How clearly manifest it is that ye “know

not the Lord"—that no Spirit of adoption cries within you "Abba, Father"—that ye value not the mercies of the Everlasting Covenant—that Jesus is still unlovely in your eyes—that ye are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel—and can entertain no scriptural hope in this world of glory in the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ. Say not, 'We have no learning, and therefore cannot pray:' A starving wretch does not need learning to ask for food: A beggar knows full well how to crave our charity. You could easily ask some temporal good, if by asking you might have it. Say not again, 'We have no time to pray:' In whose hand is your breath, and Who adds to the number of those nights and days through which you prayerlessly live? O let not "the stork in the heaven know her appointed time, and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming," and you yourselves be ignorant of the "judgment of the Lord," and indisposed to know it. Ye are fallen creatures; condemned sinners; perishing immortals; ye therefore *ought* to pray. Ye need God's 'special grace' to awaken, to convert, to purify and save your souls: this you are *taught* to pray for. You ask not: therefore you receive not. Then "take with you words, and turn unto the Lord." Live not another day without calling upon the God of Israel. If his blessing be not upon you,—how shall I speak it?—his curse will attend you. If his hand be not *with* you, it will be *against* you. If He enlarge you not, you will be bound and enslaved for ever. If He save you not from evil, evil will grieve you unutterably and eternally. If, on the contrary, you come as another self-condemned and guilty prodigal to your Almighty Father, he will meet you in love and abundantly pardon you. If there be the cry of penitence in your lips, the gracious Saviour will not spurn

you from him. "Behold, he calleth thee," and "if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is; blessed are all they that put their trust in him!" But I would speak to

2. *Any among you who may pray formally.*

There are many who maintain a form of daily worship. If we ask them whether they pray, 'O yes, say they; we always say our prayers.' But we much fear the prayers of many are formal, customary, unmeaning words. That they are so, may too easily be proved. Prayer with them induces self-complacency: it is, they think, so much done towards the purchase of salvation and eternal life: it is, too, a work which, they hope, will recommend them to God's favour and compensate for their sins. Thus they pray—not as a condemned criminal would sue for mercy, or as a perishing soul to be saved—but to please themselves and to gratify the natural pride of the carnal mind. If other proof were wanting of formality in the prayers of many persons, one thing there is that indisputably demonstrates it—*they look for no answer to their prayers*: they are not concerned to obtain what they ask for; yea, more, if God were to bestow on many the things they ask for, they would be disconcerted and surprised, and be ready, with more than usual earnestness, to beg him to resume his gifts. We might instance this in almost every prayer of the formalist. When asking God to write all the commandments of the Law in his heart; to be enabled diligently to keep them; to be altogether and unreservedly devoted to the Saviour's glory; and so on: Does he *mean* all this? Does he think that God will do as he has besought him to do? Does he wait and watch and

long to be answered? No! nothing like it; and hence we may be excused for speaking strongly upon the formality of prayer. ‘O,’ we sometimes hear it said, ‘I say my prayers, and I go to Church.’ Beloved, *saying* prayers is not necessarily *praying*, nor is *going to Church*, *prayer*. I could tell you of one who attained to three score years and ten, and who, after he was seventy years of age, acknowledged to me that although he had kept his Church and said his prayers for many years, yet he believed that till then he had *never prayed at all*. I could tell you of another who passed the greater portion of a very lengthened life in regularly attending Church, who yet assured me that nothing surprised her so much as the Prayers of the Church, after her mind had become religiously affected: they were perfectly new to her, and now her whole heart found delight and comfort in them. This is no uncommon case. Now, with “the form of sound words which ye have received to hold,” my desire is that you should “pray with the spirit and with the understanding also.” God must be worshipped spiritually, to be worshipped acceptably. He must not be to us an “*unknown God*.” We must conceive worthily of him. The terrors of the offended Deity, must be lost in the mildness, the mercifulness, the loveliness, of a pitying and redeeming Saviour. “God is *in Christ* reconciling the world unto himself.” It is *by Christ* and *through the Spirit*, that we have access to the Father.^a When, therefore, you come before the Lord, it must be in the way of his appointment. Sincerity of purpose and holiness of desire must mark your approaches to him. Not only must you well say your forms of devotion, but there must be a heart correspondent with them.^b You must

^a Eph. ii. 18.

^b Deut. v. 28, 29.

mean what you say, and expect (with deference to the Divine will) what you ask. Prayer is the habit of a regenerate soul. It is the sigh, the groan, the wish, of the lowly and contrite spirit. We do not decry forms; we use them and approve of them:—but *rested in*, after a listless and a formal manner, they are dangerous, and unaccompanied with the power of godliness, they are useless. Real religion is an inward thing: and I am solicitous that you should carefully examine the nature of your prayers, why you say them, and what you expect from them, in order to judge correctly concerning the reality of your piety. See that you come not short of vital and influential “fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” I say finally and

3. *To any of you who do truly pray,*

“Continue instant in prayer,” “always, like Ephraim, labouring fervently in prayer,” and like Jabez, crying, “O that thou wouldest bless me!” I am aware that many who do truly pray are wont to say, ‘Ah! we pray, as we trust; but, alas! our prayers are so few, so cold, so straitened; we feel so many misgivings; the doubts and fears of our wicked hearts so often prevail, that we much fear our prayers are not heard, that God sees how we dishonour him by distrusting him; how our minds wander, and how impatient we sometimes feel because our wants are not so soon supplied as we would have them to be.’ Is this the language of any among you? Then certainly has God poured a Spirit of grace and of supplications upon you. You do truly pray. Your aversion to formality and your desire to be sincere, evidence the Holy Spirit’s presence in your heart. Fearful you may be; but hopeful you should be. It is well if you see that but

for “the blood of sprinkling” your duties would as certainly condemn you as your sins. This leads you simply to rely on Jesus and him crucified. Through Him alone you expect to be blessed, enlarged, and kept from evil. And whilst you ground all your dependence—not upon your saying prayers and keeping to your Church, though that you will do from purer motives and for nobler ends, but—on the merits and mediation of a Saviour, you may “open your mouth wide and God will fill it.” If you can find in yourselves the character to which any promise is annexed, you may ask with assurance of success the mercy promised. Am I, for example, “weary and heavy-laden?” Then may I come to Jesus Christ, and in him I shall find “rest unto my soul.” The same reasoning holds good with reference to every other promised blessing, and a praying individual may go on to ask every blessing that suits his state and necessity. God granted Jabez *all* which he requested: and even *more* than all we can either ask or think, can God do for us. Then, pray on, in humble dependence upon his grace. Remember Who it is that “bears the iniquity of your holy things.” Can human fears prevail to drown “the strong cryings” of Jesus Christ? Does he not live to make intercession for us? And though for the trial of our faith, and in order to increase our importunity in prayer, the Lord “may make as though he heard us not,” yet the “*Oh! that thou wouldest bless me*” of an adopted and a beloved child, most surely reaches the eternal Father’s ear, and when it pleases him in his wisdom and mercy to notice it, he will bless that child “*indeed.*” Does a Jabez—a child of sorrow, pray? “I will satiate, saith your God, the weary soul, and replenish every sorrowful soul.” Surely then “*ye ought alway to pray and not to faint.*” Even though the mercy ye supplicate be delayed in its

bestowment, yet, “*wait for it ; it will surely come ; it will not “tarry” beyond the moment when it shall most refresh you. “My God, may you say, we know thee.”^a* You know him to be true, powerful, and kind : You know that he heareth prayer and answereth it : You know that he can do all things for you, and if ye will “watch and pray,” you shall one day with high and rapturous praise declare—“There failed not aught of any good thing, which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel ; all came to pass.”^b

“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy Faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. To him be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

^a Hos. viii. 2.

^b Jos. xxi. 45.

SERMON XXIX.

THE BARREN FIG-TREE.

LUKE XIII. 6—9.

He spake also this parable ; A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard ; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none : cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it ; And if it bear fruit, well ; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.

THIS passage of holy Writ is called a parable. A parable is a kind of figurative speech, in which one thing is said and another thing is meant. To teach by parable was the usual mode of instruction practised among the wise men of the East. They taught thus to excite enquiry in the minds of their hearers, and when their hearers could not thoroughly comprehend what was said, they would come to their teachers to be more fully informed. Thus it was with our blessed Lord and his

disciples. Jesus spake many things unto them by parables, and without a parable, particularly in the earlier stages of his Ministry, spake he not unto them : and those of you who are conversant with the Gospel-history, will recollect how often the disciples came subsequently to Jesus, saying, “ Explain to us such and such a parable.” Now, my Brethren, Jesus Christ yet speaks in his written Word, and therein he frequently speaks to us also by parables : but need we not often Philip’s question to the Treasurer of the Ethiopian Queen to be put to us—“ Understandest thou what thou readest ?” We hear and we read the sayings of Jesus Christ ; but truly might we say, like some of old, “ We cannot tell what he saith.” And why is this ? It is because we do not pray, “ Lord, open to us this parable : open thou our eyes that we may see the wondrous things of thy Law.” We do not sit with becoming seriousness, thoughtfulness, and prayer, over our Bibles, and therefore God’s Word for the most part remains a sealed book to us. I would fain, however, believe you wish to know what the parable before us means, and we will now proceed to notice, in regular succession, its several particulars.

And, first of all, we remark *a vineyard*, wherein a certain man had planted a fig-tree. As amongst ourselves, gardens and orchards prevail ; so in the hilly country of Judea, vineyards were generally cultivated. The goodly boughs of the vine were used gracefully to overshadow and adorn the heights of that once favoured land. We can readily suppose the planter of a vineyard to feel peculiar interest in the work of his hands. How patiently would he wait for the pleasant fruit ! how carefully would he prop the tender branches ! and when some among his vine-plants were waxen old, how kindly would he screen them from the stormy wind and tem-

pest, and prune them also, in order to their more abundant fruitfulness ! Behold here a picture of the Church of God. “ Ye are God’s husbandry,” ye are God’s vineyard, and therein, though “ wild by nature,” hath it pleased the Heavenly Husbandman to plant you. We are admitted by baptism into the visible Church of Christ. Therein we stand as trees which the Lord’s right hand hath planted. Whilst many millions of mankind are growing in the wilds and deserts of heathen ignorance, and millions more are involved in popish darkness and superstition, it is our privilege to dwell in a Christian country, to belong to a Protestant community, to bask in the bright and ever brightening beams of mercy and truth, and to be (at least nominally and professionally) “ the vineyard of the Lord of hosts.”

We notice next *the Owner’s inspection* of his vineyard. “ He came,” we read, into his vineyard. Which of us, possessing a flowering or a fruit-bearing garden, does not occasionally visit it with high expectations of interest and pleasure ? pass enquiringly from one part of it to another ? from one tree to another ? from one blossom to another ? Do we not so especially when “ the winter is past ; the rain is over and gone ; the flowers appear in the earth ; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land ? when the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell ? ”^a In like manner does God inspect his Church ; nor is there a single individual member of it upon whom his watchful and enquiring eye does not continually rest. He knows us altogether : He trieth the spirits and weigheth the actions of men : He is amongst us at this moment : yea, at this moment is the Lord God walking

^a Cant. ii. 11—13.

among the trees of his Garden : and, but for our sin which we contracted in the fall of Adam, and have since committed in ourselves, we should hear the voice of the Lord God, and be willing that in the cool of every day he should come into his vineyard and mark our growth in grace and in the knowledge of his beloved Son. But, although we see him not, “ God is, nevertheless, in this place.” “ His eye beholds and his eyelids try the children of men.” He passes from one of us to another, and with a scrutiny the most exact and penetrating, does he inspect the thoughts of every heart amongst us. He marks the tree which may have weathered the storms of a century’s better half, and observes the suckling beneath its parental shade, and from both old and young he expects proper and seasonable fruit. He comes seeking fruit ; he comes, if haply he may find in us any thing corresponding with his forbearance and goodness towards us.

In the third place, we notice *the discovery of the barren tree*. The planter came into his vineyard, seeking fruit on the fig-tree he had planted there ; but found none. We, perhaps, go into our garden, and amidst the rich luxuriance that prevails around us, we see a tree which puts forth no buds : no bursting germs bespeak a fulness of blossom or waken anticipation of future fruitfulness. We remember, it may be, that last year it bore us little or nothing, and now there is still less probability of its bearing any fruit. We may have digged about it and dressed it : yea, and because it was a barren tree we may have taken more especial pains to make it fruitful. But, alas ! after all our labour, the tree is barren still. Who of us all may not behold in this worthless plant the semblance of himself ? O how has our most gracious Planter and Keeper cared for us ! how has he watered us with the

dew of his blessing ! how has he comforted us on every side ! how has he beamed forth in the face of Jesus Christ with beseeching tenderness upon us ! how has he dressed us, warned us, threatened and caressed us ! In what a fruitful hill has he planted us ! How, too, has he gathered up and removed all the opposing difficulties that barred our access to himself, and hindered our fruitfulness in his ways ! Justly may God appeal to ourselves and say, “ What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ? ” What indeed ? And yet, O yet, after all he is constrained to say, “ Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this tree and find none. ” And may I not ask, Has God come to many of us seeking the fruits of penitence and faith and love these *three years* ONLY ? *We* should think three years a long time to wait for the budding or fruit-bearing of a tree : but, O the marvellous long-suffering of God ! He has come these ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and, it may be, even fifty years seeking fruit on some of us, and yet found none. Now again he comes and finds us barren still. Is there not one and another to whom I speak that is discovered to himself to be the barren fig-tree ? All nature revives at the bidding of its Lord : summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, come and go in regular and beautiful succession, and you remain still the same. Fruits, you will say, you bear : Yes ; but while you are apart from God and unreconciled to him through the death of his Son—while you know nothing of union with Christ, and the Spirit’s quickening agency, your fruits can only be sour grapes—grapes of which no use can be made, and in which God can take no delight. Unregenerate nature is in every person and in every age what Moses told the Israelites they were—“ the vine of Sodom.”^a And the

^a Deut. xxxii. 32.

vine of Sodom will not be found to produce the grapes of Eschol. Hence, notwithstanding all the boasted fruitfulness of the natural man, he is in fact the barren fig-tree still. "Israel is an empty vine; he bringeth forth fruit to himself."^a

Let us, in the next place, notice *the Owner's determination respecting it*. We see he determined to "cut it down." Now, what if we had come three years successively into our Garden, and found that year after year some favourite plant was dried up and withered, or, at most, that our tree bore us only leaves and fruits of a very inferior quality and of a useless kind? How should we feel towards it? What should we think? Should we not probably say in our heart, 'I'll cut this tree down or pluck it up: it is no use here: it does but cumber the ground and occupy the room of a better and a more fruitful plant?' Would not this probably be our reasoning? Then such is God's determination respecting every tree in his vineyard that bears him no fruit. Why, he asks, cumbereth it the ground? Will it after so many years of barrenness bear any thing agreeable to my will? Will it not rather, after all I have done or could do for it, remain the same? Cut it, therefore, down: cut it down, my servant; dress it no more: let it alone: let it alone, my Spirit; no longer strive with it: let it alone, my Minister; no longer warn, beseech, and threaten it: let it alone, Conscience; no more do thou require repentance, faith in the Gospel of Jesus, and works that shall evidence that faith's reality: *cut it down*, and as the tree falls, so let it lie. Such is the Owner's determination respecting the barren fig-tree: but, O Beloved, "we have an Advocate with the Father," and we therefore proceed to notice

^a Hos. x. 1.

The intercession made for the barren fig-tree. “Lord,” says the Dresser of the vineyard, “let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it”—use other and more abundant means with it, in order, if possible, to induce fruitfulness. Let us suppose ourselves walking in a garden in company with a friend: As we pass along, we come to a vine that bears us nothing, or to a tree that we deem worthless—a mere cumberer of the ground. We say to our friend, ‘I mean to cut this tree down: it is of little use to me here: it will afford fuel for the fire.’ Our friend looks and inspects the tree, and says, ‘Let it be for a while, another year or so: I will dress it: it is not quite dead: there are a few buds: perhaps there may be latent blossoms and fruits in them: the tree is young; it has not seen so many summers yet as others of its fellows may have done; perhaps, after all the care and labour lost upon it, it will, through patience and forbearance, bear us some fruit.’ What, my Brethren, would this be? Would it not be *intercession* for the barren tree? Then just so do your Ministers intercede for you. As the Dressers of Jehovah’s Vineyard, we cry, ‘Lord, let our barren trees alone: spare them yet another year, till we shall more abundantly have laboured for them.’ But, more than all, does the one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus, stay the up-lifted arm that might justly fell us and procure us space for repentance. Yes, O ye, who cumber the ground of the Church, Jesus maketh intercession even for you. Therefore it is that God is so long-suffering to you-ward. For his dear sake is another hour, another day, another year, added to your fruitless and misspent lives. The nature of the corrupt tree may hence through forbearing kindness and tender mercy, yet be changed. O that the Spirit’s new-creating energy may move in the means, and make

the means of conversion effectual for their end ! But, remember, ye hitherto unfruitful professors of the Christian name, your day of reprieve is on the wing. What though you be spared “another year?” that year will close, and how know you that ye shall see its termination? The axe of righteous retribution may smite your root before another day is added to your life. Many are already smitten. Saw you never a tree cut down even in the prime and vigour of its strength? Think as you pass along the Church-yard how many a one, once young and bidding fair to bring forth fruit as any among yourselves, lies scattered there : And why are you not numbered with the fallen dead? Why, as cumberers of the ground whereon you stand, are ye not cut down? O why? Because Jesus “liveth to make intercession for us ;” and you are spared, if haply in the use of gracious means ye may bring forth the fruits of a holy and a religious life. But if, after all, the barren tree continue barren still, we must notice lastly

The final resolve of its Owner should it continue unfruitful. “If it bear fruit, well : and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” Would it not gratify any one of us to see a tree that we had taken much care to cultivate, and which we once thought to be dead or dying, bud forth anew, and in due season repay our labour and toil on its account, by yielding fruit? Just so, Jesus Christ says it should be well if even after years of barrenness, we produced the fruits of grace. Unspeakably well would it be with us. There would be joy in heaven over a sinner that repented after fifty, sixty, or even eighty years hardihood in sin, aversion to God, contempt of his Word, and disobedience to his Law. Jesus would see of the travail of his soul, and deem himself compensated for all his sorrows and for all his labours, by the fruitfulness of a living faith in a con-

verted sinner. The Holy Spirit would rejoice to qualify and meeten such an one for glory. The riches of God's grace would be exceedingly magnified in him. Our desert-world would possess another righteous man whose deeds of kindness should cheer and bless it while he continued in it. Well it should be with him, and no more should it be said, "The vine is dried up and the fig-tree languisheth."^a But if our remaining days be idled away; if notwithstanding all our means of knowledge and improvement; if *after all*, "evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness," do still proceed from within and come out of a man's heart, then after that, he shall be cut down.^b Both the redeemed servants of the Lord and their Lord himself will approve the judgment. The interceding Saviour will say to the eternal Father—"Cut him down." The deadly presence and the noxious shade of the wicked man shall not always darken and deform the Church of God. God will thoroughly rid his creation of all but trees of righteousness. A name to live where deadliness is dominant, will not preserve us. The leaves of mere profession will not abide the scrutiny of God: nothing short of vital, deep-rooted, and heartfelt godliness will satisfy him. Those there are who (as the Prophet remarks) seem to bear "two or three berries on the outermost bough"—just fruit enough to catch the eye of a passing stranger, who yet must rank among the barren trees: for, come to the innermost branches—come to the feelings, the affections, and the desires of the soul, and alas! what barrenness of love to Jesus Christ, what barrenness of joy and peace in believing, what barrenness, in short, of Christian principle and Christian ex-

^a Joel i. 12.

^b Mark vii. 21—23.

perience, will you find! Alas! we fear that many a blooming and yet fruitless professor will come down. As children of sinful Adam, we are all “turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine :”^a unless we become regenerate, all our fruits will be found sour and nauseous : and cut down we shall certainly be if we live and die unchanged. And what, let me ask you, what would you do with a dead and worthless tree which you might fell in your own garden? To what purpose would you most probably apply it? Would you not deem it fit for burning, and use it as a fire-material? And does not Jesus say, “Bring hither these mine enemies that would not I should reign over them, and slay them—hew them in pieces—before my face?” And will he not moreover add, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels?” Thus you see the barren fig-tree that will ultimately, after all the favour shewn to it, be found barren still, will be deemed fuel for the fire : and “who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”^b “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire ;”^c but “who shall stand when God doeth this?”

Such is the Parable : and now we have noticed the vineyard wherein a certain man planted a fig-tree : the Owner’s inspection of it : the discovery of the barren tree therein : the Owner’s determination respecting it : the intercession made by the Dresser of the vineyard for it ; and the final resolve of its Owner should it continue still unfruitful : the DESIGN with which Jesus spake this Parable may very properly furnish us with some closing remarks.

At a particular season some there were who told our Lord of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had unjustly

^a Jer. ii. 21.

^b Isa. xxxiii. 14.

^c Matt. iii. 10.

shed while they were coming to worship with sacrifice in the Temple. “Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you, *Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” Our Lord then further alludes to an accident which had happened at Jerusalem, and whereby eighteen persons were deprived suddenly of their lives. He then asks again, “Think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, *Nay: (and again does Jesus solemnly repeat) but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” And the more powerfully to impress the necessity of immediate repentance and reformation on the minds of his audience, “he spake *also this parable*” which we have just considered. The design, therefore, of the parable is evidently to inculcate a great moral and spiritual change—a repentance originating in the heart and diffusing itself in its effects through all the outer conduct. The use we should make of others’ sufferings is—not to judge and to condemn the sufferers as though they were guiltier and more sinful than ourselves; but to examine our own lives, and by a speedy repentance and a timely humiliation to prevent our own destruction. Jesus advises each one of us to look to himself: for, unless *we* repent, we must perish. Let us, then, consider our ways. Let us think how much and long we have been privileged with means and ordinances: how often we have been dug about and dressed: and how many a year, notwithstanding, we have been found fruitless and barren. A people’s continued unprofitableness under ministerial care and culture, damps, in time, ministerial intercession for them. God is provoked to bring his judgments unavoidably upon them. Then, “repent ye and believe the Gospel.” Say ye, ‘We cannot change our own

hearts?' True; you cannot: but "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Say ye again, 'Our hearts are hard and insensible: we cannot feel as we desire and wish we could?' They may be, and harder too than the stones ye tread upon: but, "I will take the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh," is God's most gracious promise. Say ye further, 'We cannot cease from sin: we are tempted and overcome?' Did you ever try, or do you try to cease from sin? In whose strength do you attempt to do so? Go ye not often voluntarily into temptation? Can we marvel then that sin should have dominion over you? Your strength is weakness: but if, like the stripling David, you will go forth in the Name of the Lord of hosts, Goliaths, great and powerful soever as they may be, shall fall before you. Cease from sin you *must*: changed in spirit and disposition you *must* be: if ye have grown grey-headed in the vineyard of the Lord, and be still void of spiritual fruits, ye must be altered men, or the Lord will cut you down. Say I this of myself? It is the loving Friend of sinners who says, "Except ye repent, ye shall perish:" "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Solemnly important is the word—*conversion*. It means no less than a corrupt tree's becoming a good tree. The very nature of the tree must be altered. In vain shall we look for grapes from a thorn, or figs from a thistle. There must be a renovation of the inner man, a recreation of light, knowledge, taste, affection, aim, and hope within us. *Wild* we are by nature, as St. Paul remarks: our natural fruits at best are poor, and 'we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.' We must then be gathered off our own stock and grafted anew. Jesus is the "true vine:" and to resemble him, we must be partakers of his na-

ture. Through union and communion with him, we must receive out of his fulness. His Spirit's fruits can only appear where his Spirit operates. "The righteous (and who can be *righteous* but as justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God?) shall flourish as a palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing." Then pray ye for the converting and renewing grace of the Spirit. Your branches shall then unfold, and your boughs be laden with fruits "holy and acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Your beauty shall be stately and majestic as the olive tree, and your smell fragrant and odorous as Lebanon.^a Israel shall no longer bring forth fruit to himself: *himself* shall be humble, contrite, and meek: his Lord alone shall be exalted, because from *him* is his fruit found. And never will that Lord cut down a soul that loves and serves him: never shall a believer in Jesus become fuel for the devouring fire: never shall the penitential sorrow that issues in conversion be aggravated by the gnawing of the worm that dieth not, and the fury of the fire that shall not be quenched. When the Son of God shall obey the mandate, "Thrust in thy sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe"—no humble and forgiven sinner shall be gathered into the winepress of the wrath of God.^b Let this encourage the most graceless and fruitless soul among you to repent. I trust he to whom your hearts are open, sees it to be the rising purpose of your soul to go and with persevering earnestness to beg him to dig about you and to dress you, to spare you yet another year, and in his merciful and

^a Hos. xiv. 6.

^b Rev. xiv. 18, 19.

gracious love to save you. O if you knew your danger as a fruitless tree, you would know something of God's forbearing mercy towards you. If ye *felt* your barrenness, you would be filled with wonder and amazement to find yourselves spared and preserved so long. O that ye may yet become "a noble vine!"^a May the Lord pity your desolations! "Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from Heaven, behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch which thou madest strong for thyself."^b Brought out of the spiritual Egypt, and planted in the Canaan of the Christian Church, may ye eventually dwell in the triumphant kingdom of Messiah, and through the untold ages of eternity be adducing still more and more abundantly the fruits of righteousness and praise to his Name! "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly—even proportioned to your fervour, watchfulness, and fruitfulness—into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."^c To him, as "the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

^a Jer. ii. 21.^b Psalm lxxx. 14, 15.^c 2 Pet. i. 5—11.

SERMON XXX.

THE MIGHT AND POWER OF GOD'S SPIRIT
DEMONSTRATED.

ZECHARIAH IV. 6.

*Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith
the Lord of hosts.*

THE Jews had been captives in Babylon. The years, however, wherein they were to suffer adversity, were passed away. A decree was issued permitting their return to Canaan. When returned to the land of their fathers, they began to build anew their once glorious but now fallen and desolate Temple. Its foundation was laid amidst the tears of some who remembered the grandeur of the former Building, and the joyous acclamations of others to whom that grandeur was unknown.^a The builders, it appears, proceeded but tardily in their work. They grew weary of it, (so prone, alas! is man to weariness in well-doing) and even ex-

^a Ezra iii. 10—13.

cused their negligence, saying, "The time is not come, the time that the house of the Lord should be built." To reprove them came "the word of the Lord by Haggai, the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house to lie waste?" The people trembled at the Prophet's word, and "came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God."^a To Haggai succeeded Zechariah in the prophetical office. To the daughter of Zion, Zechariah says, "Sing and rejoice; for, lo, I come; and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." And inasmuch as the Jews builded the Temple only as they were supernaturally influenced and encouraged to do so, the whole glory of the work would exclusively pertain to God, and on this no less than on every similar occasion, his own arm would bring salvation to him. "This, therefore, is the word of the Lord by Zechariah the prophet, unto Zerubbabel, saying, *Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts:*" that is, not by the might or the power of man, should the house of God be builded; but, by the powerful and efficacious energy of the Holy Spirit influencing the minds of the people.

Thus it is also with God's *spiritual* house—"whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." We do not naturally affect union with Christ or with each other in him: yea, rather, we are naturally averse to "build upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, and on Jesus Christ as being the chief corner stone." Not therefore by might nor by power in ourselves, shall we ever "be fitly framed together or grow unto an holy temple in the Lord." No: If ever we

^a Hag. chap. i.

be “builded together for an habitation of God,” it must be “*through the Spirit*.” And thus brought into conjunction as “the church of the living God” through the agency of the eternal Spirit, the whole glory of the work will accrue to its divine and gracious Operator, and it will be found that though “every house is builded by some man or instrument, yet he that buildeth all things is God.” “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”

Our subject, then, you perceive, is the *Spirit's influence on the human mind*. It is, confessedly, a mysterious subject, and one requiring to be handled with a modest and an enlightened judgment: nevertheless, it is a subject also of a very delightful kind, and one involving all the essential ingredients of scriptural and experimental piety. In further discoursing upon Spiritual influence, we shall endeavour to shew its *necessity*, its *nature*, and its *evidence*.

And I. Its *necessity*.

That a divine influence on the human mind is necessary, will, we conceive, abundantly appear from the following statements.

“God made man upright;” “in the image of God created he man:” and so nearly did man resemble his Almighty Maker that his Maker himself took pleasure in the contemplation of his creature's excellence. Man was holy, and therefore also by necessary consequence, happy. He lived and walked in near and sweet communion with the Lord. All his powers were subservient to his will, and *his* will was in entire and grateful unison with God's will. From this state of exalted blessedness, man, beguiled by the subtlety of Satan, fell; and in falling lost the image in which he was

created, and became an alien and an outcast from the Divine presence and favour. ‘Thereby it came to pass that as before he was blessed, so now he was accursed ; as before he was loved, so now he was abhorred ; as before he was most beautiful and precious, so now he was most vile and wretched in the sight of his Lord and Maker : instead of the image of God, he was now become the image of the Devil ; instead of the citizen of heaven, he was become the bond-slave of hell, having in himself no one part of his former purity and cleanness, but being altogether spotted and defiled ; inso-much that now he seemed to be nothing else but a lump of sin, and therefore by the just judgment of God was condemned to everlasting death.’^a Hence originates the aversion which man’s sinful nature feels to a pure and holy God. Union betwixt holiness and sin, there cannot be. “The carnal mind is enmity against God : for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be.” This enmity against God marks the state of every child of Adam. As is the root, such must the branches be : as is the fountain, correspondent to it must be the streams that issue from it. We are conceived and born in sin ; and until we are “born again,” we are utterly incapable of renewed communion with God. Is there, then, no necessity for Spiritual or supernatural influence on man’s heart ? Is there power or might in us whereby we can, alone and unassisted, overcome our hatred of holiness and our love of sin ? Who shall take us away the impediment that bars our willing access unto God, and hinders a sincere and cordial delight in all his righteous will ?—“Not by might, nor by power ; but, by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”

^a Homily on the Nativity.

But, let us be somewhat more particular. Whence, I would ask, come all the ambitious rivalries, the envious strifes, the unjust dealings, the cruel oppressions, which abound in almost every period and country of the world? "Come they not hence, even of the lusts, that war in our members?" And can any thing short of Almighty Agency controul those impure desires and renovate the unholy passions and propensities of fallen humanity? Men may boast of the freedom of their will; but the will, in whatever respects it may be free, is naturally disinclined to good and powerless to perform it when it is perceived. To "choose the good and to refuse the evil," we readily admit to be our duty; but where is our inclination or our ability to fulfil this duty? As well might we attempt the practice of holiness without "a new heart and a right spirit," as the children of Israel make brick without material for the work. And who, except the one infinitely wise and powerful Creator, can renew the heart and recreate its principles? To *create* is, confessedly, the sole prerogative of Deity: "not by power, therefore, or might," in ourselves, can we be made new creatures or "lively stones" in the living temple of our God; but, "by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

"Wherefore, then, it will be said, serveth the Law?" What is its use? Wherefore was the Law revealed? "It was added, we answer, because of transgressions." "The Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane," for, in short, any species of offender, and on account of any departure in moral principle and conduct from the perfect will of God. The very existence of a written Law implies mankind's depravity and weakness. "Where no Law is, there is no transgression;" and where transgression

is, the Law discovers it : yea, the Law entered that the offence might abound, and the whole world be shewn its guiltiness before God. Now, with all our professed regard to external conduct, and all our fancied deference to the Divine Commandments, we feel, if we will candidly admit it, utterly incompetent to fulfil the Law : its spirituality we are averse to : its strict requirements offend us ; and there are not wanting seasons in our intellectual being when we would fain pluck the righteous Lawgiver from the throne of his high authority, and in the angry rebellion of our unhumbled heart, we would remodel the Law which he has promulged, agreeably to our own wishes and abilities. In truth, this is actually done by those who view the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a remedial Law, who teach a conditional justification, and require a sincere though imperfect obedience only, in order to our acceptance and forgiveness. But cordial delight in the Law, as “ holy, just, and good,” there can be none without a gratuitous pardon and a conscious freedom from the condemnation of the Law. We need nothing to recommend us to a Saviour, and no obedience whatever of our’s avails for our forgiveness and acceptance. God “ justifieth the ungodly,” and “ the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus maketh us free from the Law of sin and death :” and now is “ the righteousness of the Law fulfilled” in those who confide simply in the death of God’s beloved Son as a sacrifice for sin, and “ walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” And how can the bias of the flesh be changed and a man become “ spiritually minded” otherwise than by a spiritual influence upon him ? With all the power and might he can command, may a person aim to keep the precepts of religion, but he will never really love them but “ by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” Our heart must first be free,

before we can run in the way of God's commandments. We must be "partakers of the Divine nature" before we can cordially rejoice in its essential holiness, and approach without dismay its dazzling purity.

Is it not, moreover, universally admitted that mankind can easily and readily set their affections on things below, whilst it is with painful difficulty they can send a single thought before them to the world of spirits? How freely can we think and care and toil for our mortal; how scarcely can we bestow any thing like becoming thought or carefulness or labour on our immortal part? Most certainly is it so—"we cannot see afar off." What concerns our temporal ease, honour, and comfort, we are quick to discern: the country where our Saviour dwells, and which is declared to be "very far off," and away from sin, from suffering, and from all that characterizes our present tarrying place, we have no eyes to see. Now, as well in a moral as in a literal sense, "since the world began, was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one born blind." Is there power in man to do so? If not, can any except the Lord the Spirit clear our mental vision, give to our souls a spiritual discernment, and draw our hearts with their conceivings and desires heaven-ward? And without this holy and heaven-ward bias, shall we be found fit for a world of glory when our clay tenement crumbles into dust, or is raised again from mortal death? We are disordered in all our faculties. Our will, as we have before intimated, is averse to good and prone to evil. Our understanding is darkened. How strangely tenacious of vain and impure ideas, and how treacherously forgetful of those of a spiritual kind, is our memory! Does not conscience sleep or waken to little purpose in most persons? We know not the Lord, nor do we care to know him. We would form a God all-

merciful and void of justice. Jesus Christ we do not heartily esteem or frankly acknowledge. Boastful of our own power and might, we do not look for supernatural aid. The precious blood-shedding of the holy Lamb does not win our regard, and possibly the hallowing and renewing agency of the Holy Ghost affords matter for mockery and scorn. Is there then, again I ask, no needs-be for a spiritual energy to be exerted upon our minds? Can any less powerful agent than the Spirit of God re-organize our faculties and adduce harmony, loveliness, and order, out of the confusion that prevails within us? Hewn from nature's quarry, must we not be fashioned anew before we can know a grateful and obedient union with the "elect and precious corner-stone, the tried and sure foundation which God hath laid in Zion?"

Men may pretend to moral excellence, and even to much liveliness and zeal in religious duty; but "not by might nor by power" of their own can they attain to it or persevere in it. Various motives may induce propriety of conduct: Worldly policy; love of human praise; dread of the Divine displeasure, and fear of an hereafter reckoning, all may do so. Witness, too, the self-inflicted tortures and the painful privations of the heathen devotee: witness the seclusion, the maceration, the abstinence, and the penance of the popish monk. What strenuous efforts will they make to be, as they fondly imagine, holy: but all in vain. Man may be pleased for his approval's sake: God may be feared where he is not loved. A "voluntary humility" will often feed our self-complacency. The world may be renounced in pretence whilst it is manifestly desired in the practice; a reputation for sanctity may be obtained, where the vilest deeds are indulged. "No evil thing," it may be, can be said of many, who yet

know nothing of "joy in the Holy Ghost," and those groanings of the Spirit whereby the Spirit maketh intercession for us. Paul speaks of "joy in God," and Peter mentions "gladness and exceeding joy:" this mental satisfaction cannot be known till we can look up with some measure of hope and assurance to God as reconciling us to himself in the person of Jesus Christ. We can "walk with God as dear children" only as "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are *indeed* his children." The power and might of man may go far in acquiring knowledge and correctness of outward deportment; but no one can savingly know the truth and be really holy, but as taught of God and sanctified by the Holy Ghost. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; and no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." "No man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." "He taketh of the things that are his and sheweth them unto us." "His understanding is infinite." "He searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God." And therefore 'as for the works of the Spirit, the fruits of faith, charitable and godly motions, if a man have any at all in him, they proceed only of the Holy Ghost, who is the alone worker of our sanctification, and maketh us new men in Christ Jesus.'^a "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

We might instance further, the commonly and plainly apparent inutility of ministerial labour; the unprofitableness of outward means alone considered, and a variety of similar circumstances, all tending to prove the necessity of spiritual influence: but that necessity is now, we conceive, fully established, and we therefore proceed to shew you

^a Homily for Whitsunday.

II. Its *nature* :

And here be it premised that we do not feel ourselves called upon to explain the mode or manner of the Spirit's operation on the human mind. The existence of the fact is sufficient for our purpose. The Holy Ghost, in his nature and operations, our Church believes to be 'incomprehensible.' He is "excellent in working, wonderful in counsel, and his footsteps are not known." And why need we desire to know them? We are contentedly ignorant of many things. How our own mind operates on our body, we know not. How the acorn contains in itself the germ of after life, and how that germ expands into the stately and luxuriant tree, we know not. In like manner "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: *so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" Our spiritual being in its commencement, in its progress, and in its consummation, is mysterious: but the more it is hid from our understanding, the more ought it to move all men to wonder at the secret and mighty working of God's Holy Spirit. Of this we may be persuaded—the value of the agency will correspond with the nature of the Agent. Now 'as to the Spirit's nature, it is altogether one with God the Father and God the Son; that is to say, spiritual, eternal, uncreated, almighty: yea, to be brief, the Spirit is God and Lord everlasting.' And agreeable to his high and essential excellence will be the holy Spirit's work. The office he sustains in the economy of redemption is infinitely glorious; and as the Testifier of Jesus and the Regenerator of the world, will he be infinitely and for ever glorified.

One other remark may be necessary ere we notice

the nature of the Spirit's agency :—it is not *miraculous* ; it is not, we mean, such an influence as enabled the Prophets to foretel future events—to conceive so sublimely, and to express their conceptions so beautifully, as, from their Writings, we are sure they did. It is not, moreover, such an influence as enabled the Apostles, in the first ages of Christianity, to acquire languages without previous study, to heal diseases by a touch, and to raise the dead with a word. Whatever may be hereafter, when the Church shall strengthen her stakes and lengthen her cords, and the millions of mankind shall be gathered within her pale, after the restoration of Israel and Judah, the advent in glory of the King Messiah, and the predetermined judgment of God upon the Gentile Apostacy, has been executed ; extraordinary or miraculous influence we do not *now* expect. Influence only of an ordinary and a necessary kind do we contend for, and *that* only in an ordinary way and the use of ordinary means. Passive we may be in our regeneration by the Spirit of God ; and the simple act of our regeneration may be involved in deep and wonderful mysteriousness ; but it is when “asking for the old paths,” and waiting in the appointed way, that the Lord “teacheth us his way,” and “bringeth us unto himself by a way that we know not.”

And now we are prepared more particularly to notice the nature of the Spirit's influence. It is then, we first of all observe, *quicken*ing in its nature. “It is the Spirit that *quickeneth*.” The Gospel of Jesus is, emphatically, “the ministration of the Spirit.” Thereby it is that any persons are quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins. And the Spirit, as a sovereign Agent, “quickeneth whom he will.” If we be “begotten again unto a lively hope,” “of his own will begat he us by the Word of truth.” God may speak “once

or twice," as an occasional thing, "in a dream or in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, in slumberings upon the bed;" and that in order to "seal instruction on the heart, to withdraw man from his purpose, and to keep back his soul from the pit." He may, too, by some sudden catastrophe or alarming providence, powerfully impress the human mind and effectually benefit it; but usually the Spirit operates by "the Word of truth," and it is certainly by "the Word of truth" that all religious principle and experience must ultimately be tried. That is the seed of incorruptibility. It unites us to "the second Adam," who is "a quickening Spirit," because he is the source and fountain-head of life to all his believing members—*now* in their spiritual regeneration by the Holy Ghost; and *hereafter* in the body of immortality and glory. Thus are we, together with our Lord, "put to death in the flesh and quickened by the Spirit:" and unspeakably happy is it for the man who with the sweet singer of Israel can truly say, "*Thy word hath quickened me.*" Such an one is a living member of "the true Tabernacle"—the Tabernacle which "the Lord pitched and not man." And as often as he faints, and prays again, "Quicken me, O Lord, according to thy word," shall the Spirit's quickening energy invigorate and strengthen him anew.

That influence is, moreover, *enlightening* in its nature. The human mind, in its lapsed condition, is surprisingly inapprehensive of spiritual things. But why need we say *surprisingly* so? Walk we not naturally "in the vanity of our minds?" Are we not "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, *because of the blindness of our heart?*" Experience corroborates our assumption. It is a painful fact that endowments of the rarest kind, talents of the most splendid and commanding order, may be possessed, and yet their envied possessor may be

“alienated from the life of God,” ignorant of the things of God, reluctant to receive and slow to apprehend them; and although, it may be, familiar with “all knowledge and all mysteries,” yet darkness remains upon the mental vision, and he knows not God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent. Now where the Spirit quickens, he enlightens. Where all worldly science fails, “he commandeth and it is done.” And as the Word empowered by him quickens us when spiritually dead, so by him are our understandings opened to understand the Scriptures. Truth then acquires a radiancy and a worth never discerned before. Once “we saw men as trees walking”—things were invisible or but dimly seen: now we “see all things clearly.” Mighty and self-sufficient were we wont to be, to maintain our own opinion: now our every lofty imagination is brought low, and we unreservedly admit, that not by might nor by power of human intellect can we obtain a knowledge of the Truth, but only by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts illuminating and purifying our intellectual capacities.

That Spirit's influence is also *renewing* in its nature. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, God saveth us, by the washing of regeneration, *and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*” The impartation of life to the soul is a work perfect and complete in itself: but the developement of the new man's faculties and powers is gradual and progressive. Quickened we may be certainly and absolutely; yet “the inward man is *renewed day by day.*” Years elapse before the child of nature attains to manhood and to all the strength of full maturity: in like manner the child of grace “knows but in part,” and without attaining it in the days of the years of his earthly pilgrimage, he “goes on unto perfection.” And herein lies the grand secret of holiness. Men vainly endeavour by their own

power and might to make themselves holy. Moral duties are practised, and much “fair shew in the flesh” is made : but no hallowing and renewing principle gives it real and substantial excellence. Now, “whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” Ask ye what that seed is ? Peter tells us it is “the Word of God.” This Word is “incorruptible :” it instrumentally begets an abiding life in the soul, and becomes a principle or habit of universal graciousness and holiness.^a Thus, what the heathen devotee or the popish monk or the mere philosophical moralist cannot by any unaided efforts of his own accomplish, is accomplished “by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” By his renewing influence, we poor sinners, whose hearts by human generation are stony and unrighteous, become fair and beautiful as “the polished corners of the Temple.” “The house of the Lord is renewed.”^b Our “flesh becomes fairer than a child’s : we return to the days of our youth : we pray unto God—we come nigh in sweet and filial communion with him—and he is favourable unto us.”^c “The new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.” And wherein consists that image ? “In righteousness and true holiness.” *True* holiness, indeed, must that be which is wrought by the Holy Ghost, and participates the glorious excellency of the infinitely great and holy God. “Let,” says St. Paul, “that mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Now, we know from the evangelical narratives, that in Christ Jesus there was a lowly, a heavenly, a prayerful, a kind, and a submissive mind : and the same mind, in some measure of its unparalleled and unequalled excellence will every one

^a 1 Pet. i. 23—25.

^b 2 Chron. xxiv. 4.

^c Job xxxiii. 25, 26.

born of the Spirit possess : and where this *mind* prevails, will there be, can there be, that loose, unheeded, and immoral *conduct* which so many fear (or pretend to fear) will result from a full and plain announcement of “the Gospel of the grace of God?” Impossible. With the Saviour’s mind, there will be, so far as it is imitable, the Saviour’s conduct. With our understanding enlightened ; our will renewed ; our imagination purified ; the bias of our affections changed, and our consciences illuminated and enabled clearly to distinguish between what is spiritually good and evil, shall we feel ourselves at liberty to “sin that grace may abound?” Does not the mere supposition of such an anomaly, rouse the indignant feelings of the new-born man within us, and provoke us with somewhat of an Apostle’s fervour to exclaim—“God forbid?” In the very nature of things, he that is “of one Spirit with the Lord,” must see, and judge, and feel, and desire, and hate, and love, whatever the Lord himself affects or prohibits. Failures in judgment and in conduct, there may be, through the remaining sinfulness and weakness of “the old man”—our fallen and corrupt nature : but, it is in the grace of the Holy Spirit to renew and perfect us : and “if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us :” or, as the margin reads, *because his Spirit has dwelt in us*. And because of our present partial and our hereafter entire renewal ; “therefore, brethren, we are debtors,” and under powerful and necessary obligation—“to the flesh,” shall I say, “to live after the flesh?” no ! “for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die (whatever may be your moral or intellectual attainments in it :) but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” And mortify the deeds of the body ye can

—“not by might, nor by power of your own, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.”

Need we now say that Spiritual Influence is *sanctifying* in its nature? Wherefore is the Spirit so emphatically denominated ‘*Holy*?’ Not because he is holier than the Father or the Son from whom he proceeds, but because it is peculiarly his office to sanctify or make holy the chosen and redeemed people of God. Hence, sanctification is the renovation of the heart, and a consequent reformation of the life. And this sanctification assures us of our election, of our acceptance, and of our forgiveness in Christ. For all who experience the sanctifying influence of the Spirit, leading them, as it led Job, (chap. xlii. 5, 6.) to loathe sin and to abhor themselves on account of it; drawing them also into sweet communion and fellowship with the Father and the Son, we are bound to give thanks alway, as brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth: Whereunto he calls them by the Gospel, to the obtaining the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Read we that by power and might in man, he can sanctify himself? Is it the will of *man* even his sanctification? No: all that is good and holy in us, we trace to the will of God: and if we be justified, it is in the name of the Lord Jesus; if we be washed and sanctified, it is by the Spirit of our God. And thus “by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts,” are principles of the purest and most ennobling kind wrought in the human heart, and morals that will endure a scriptural test insured in human conduct. “The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are,” and when “the head stone thereof shall be brought forth, it will be with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.” “**HOLINESS TO THE LORD**” shall be found graven on the fore-front

of the Lord's servants; and they, as "an holy priesthood," shall "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Consoling also is the Spirit's influence in its nature. The sorrows of the saints are numerous, and sometimes distressingly severe. In tears did the Jews lay the foundation of their temple, and amidst manifold discouragements did they build it. How mournfully does even Jeremiah complain!^a How sorrowful was Daniel though a "man greatly beloved!"^b How, in later days, has a Luther fainted through excess of mental agony; and sometimes among ourselves, we have known holy men to approach the frontiers of the eternal world with fear and trembling! And thus, in his measure, does every child of God "endure chastening." "In the world," said the world's great Saviour to his followers, "ye shall have tribulation." "Through much tribulation," says a Disciple of Jesus, "must we enter the kingdom." Remaining sin; imperfect holiness; aptness to decline in watchful vigilance; the slight of friends; the enmity of the ungodly; and, more than all, the temptations of one wise to do evil, and bent with inveterate maliciousness to "deceive, if it were possible, the very elect," are things that trouble us. But, he whom Christ hath sent to be ever with his people until he come again, is most significantly called, "The Comforter." Our Lord Jesus Christ "comforts our hearts." Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, the Churches of Christ find rest, and are edified and multiplied in both grace and number. Most sweetly refreshing is the Spirit's influence. We have waived all explanation of his mode of operating on our mind: but—let the sterility and barrenness of winter

^a Lam. i. 1—21.

^b Dan. x. 2, 3.

disappear ; let “ the time of the singing of birds arrive, and the flowers appear in the earth :” O how fresh and reviving to our senses are the perfumes and the melodies of Spring ! And what produces them ? At the bidding of its Lord, the sun shines forth with warmth and power in his beams : the softening breeze sweeps over the face of Nature, and presently, where all was wintry cheerlessness, the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. We see, we feel, and we enjoy it, though the mysteriousness of the fact our understanding cannot unravel. Thus in the world of intellect and grace, comforts may abound where tribulations have abounded. When human succour fails—when the soul of the believer sighs, “ There is none to comfort me ;” and is led to take shelter in God ; that promise is fulfilled which says, “ I will speak comfortably unto her.” Then will the heart rejoice and sing. New strength will invigorate its powers ; new joy will make still more willing its previous willingness to obey, and the consolations of God will not be small with us. Thus, “ through the supply of the Spirit,” and by his cheering and strengthening agency, “ the righteous hold on their way and wax stronger and stronger.” As the oak by tempests gets more firmly fixed, so they by their temptations and trials become more strongly “ rooted and grounded in love :” “ stablished, strengthened, settled ;” built up in Christ, and stablished in the present faith and future hope of the Gospel. Jeremiah, amidst all his complainings, was favoured with peace in his heart. Daniel was filled with admiration of the Divine goodness. Luther, Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, of ancient times ; and many dear servants of the Lord in our own days, have vanquished every foe and overcome every temptation in the strength of their Divine Master, and through his enabling grace. In like manner shall every regenerate

sinner triumph. "The God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." The builders of the second temple were weakened and troubled in their work by the people of the land; this was permitted to discover to them their own powerlessness: when they wrought "according to the good hand of their God upon them," they wrought successfully, and singular to say, their very enemies were induced to further them in rebuilding the house of God.^a So shall it be in the Church of Christ. "The wrath of man shall praise him," and the enlightening consoling influence of the Spirit shall unite the several members of his mystical body in one loving and beloved brotherhood in grace; and then also, at his appearing and his kingdom, they shall be united in both person and privilege for ever. We shall be one with Christ, and Christ will be one with us: we shall dwell in him and he will dwell in us. Meanwhile the Spirit will testify of him, shew us the things that are his, and lead our expectations forward to that glorious consummation announced and described in Dan. ii. 44.

Which leads me finally to observe, The nature of the Holy Spirit's operation on the mind is *assuring*. Can we be the subjects of his *quickenings, enlightenings, renewings, sanctifying, and consoling* influences, and yet remain unassured relative to our state and safety? If a doubt could be admitted on the point, the Word of God must nullify it. The effect of righteousness—whether of imputed or of in-wrought righteousness, or of both conjointly, shall be *quietness and assurance for ever*. "And hereby we know that we are of the truth and shall *assure our heart before him*." Assurance of heart

^a Ezra iv. 4, vii. 28, and viii. 36.

before God is the brightest gem of experimental piety. It may be long before some Christians attain to it ; and others in whose piety fearfulness and doubtfulness preponderate, may not realize its enjoyment even till they appear before God in the heavenly Zion ; but attainable it is, and under the assuring influence of the gracious Sanctifier, we may possess it. The Word of life is to be tasted and handled. There must be substantial reality in what we taste and handle : and “those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil,” become by progressive acquisitions of knowledge and experience “fully persuaded in their own mind” concerning all the great and saving truths of the Gospel. Persevering in the paths of rectitude and holiness, they trust to “endure unto the end.” Enduring unto the end, they shall most certainly “receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls.” Not by might, indeed, nor by power in themselves, do they expect to persevere ; but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. By his successful aid, they hope to triumph over every foe, and to wave the palm of victory before the everlasting throne.

Such, then, is the Might and Power of God's Spirit. Such, the Church of England says, is the power of the Holy Ghost to regenerate men, and, as it were, to bring them forth anew, so that they shall be nothing like the men they were before. And is there any thing in this statement “contrary to sound doctrine?” Do we not well to ascribe all good desires in man to him who alone is good, and all ability to bring good desires to good effect—not to might or power in ourselves, but to the Spirit of the Lord of hosts ? Grant our proposition the consent you feel : admit the needs-be for Spiritual agency ; and hear us of your clemency while I endeavour to shew you

III. and lastly, Its *evidence*.

This it will be of essential importance to declare, because the influence under which many act, and by which they profess to be guided, is undoubtedly bad. “When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel; then they came to Zerubbabel and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you, for we seek your God, as ye do. But Zerubbabel and the rest of the chief of the fathers said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God.” (Ezra iv. 2—3.) Here was a professed zeal for God: but it was all unsound; the Spirit of the Lord of hosts did not inspire it. Hence it should seem that an avowed regard for God, for his cause and service, may very possibly exist where “the root of the matter” is wanting. The evidence, therefore, of which we are about to speak, must differ widely from that of the zeal of Judah’s adversaries. Respecting, too, the really regenerated character, it may be well to remark that he may grieve the Holy Spirit and quench the evidence of his favour.^a However powerful and mighty his operations may have been, sin will occasion a suspension of his influence, and negligence will overpower and weaken every apprehension of his presence, so that even a good man shall walk in darkness and have no light. Were not the gifts of the Holy Ghost abused by the Corinthians? and yet many of the Corinthians were a people “justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God.” Their privileges became their snare. See in Paul’s first Epistle to them, and particularly in its xivth. chapter,

^a Eph. iv. 30. 1 Thess. v. 19.

how surely it will be found an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God and to neglect the due improvement of his mercies. We need then, I conceive, evidence of a clear, scriptural, and abiding kind, whereby to judge of the Spirit's operations on our minds. And such an evidence will doubtless eventually be afforded wheresoever the Spirit effectually and savingly works. This we proceed to shew you.

‘How shall I know that the Holy Ghost is within me?’ some man perchance may say. Forsooth, *as the tree is known by its fruits, so also is the Holy Ghost.* The fruits of the Holy Ghost are these: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance, and the like. Contrariwise, the deeds of the flesh are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, wantonness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, debate, emulation, wrath, contention, sedition, heresy, envy, murder, drunkenness, gluttony, and such like. Here is now that glass, wherein thou must behold thyself, and discern whether thou have the Holy Ghost within thee, or the spirit of the flesh. If thou seest that thy works be virtuous and good, consonant to the pre-script rule of God's word, savouring and tasting not of the flesh, but of the Spirit, then assure thyself that thou art endued with the Holy Ghost: otherwise, in thinking well of thyself, thou dost nothing else but deceive thyself.’ (Homily for Whitsunday.)

“This testimony is true,” and affords an excellent *general* evidence of Spiritual Influence. But we will adduce some few particular circumstances that will stamp with unequivocal certainty the reality and the worth of that influence.

An immediate effect of supernatural and efficacious agency will be, a deep and humbling *conviction of sin*. A mere natural man has no conception of the heinous-

ness of moral guilt. Hence spring all the softening and extenuating titles whereby we often hear sin excused and tolerated. All will readily acknowledge themselves to be sinners, but few are sensibly conscious of their sinfulness. "In order," says the venerable Newton, "to a due conviction of sin, we must previously have some adequate conception of the God with whom we have to do. Sin may be feared as dangerous or disgraceful without this; but its nature and demerit can only be understood by being contrasted with the holiness, majesty, goodness, and truth, of the God against whom it is committed." This conviction the Spirit by his power and might produces, agreeably to the declaration of Jesus Christ, in John xvi. 8.; and where it is produced, sin will be unutterably odious. The awakened and enlightened soul will oft-times "groan, being burdened." The mere "motion of sin" will be hateful to it. It will, in moments of solemn recollection, shrink with horror from the commission of sin, and yet, perhaps, in other seasons of unwatchfulness and earthly mindedness, it will commit the very sin it abhors and hates. When the things that it would, it does not; and the things it would not, it does, most aptly befitting its condition will be the words, "O wretched man that I am!" Before the truths of the Word are perceived in their stability and excellence, much erroneous conduct may mark the earlier stages of the spiritual life. Much and laboured effort may be made to controul the corrupt affections and the prevailing sin; but to little purpose. By prayer, by repentance, and by reformation, we would fain avert displeasure and insure regard. We would do or suffer any thing to be free from sin. Self we loathe; and though sometimes we proudly arrogate to ourselves power and might, yet we presently detect the vain unholy thought and "we

repent again in dust and ashes." Now this experience strongly evidences the gracious presence of the Divine Spirit. It cannot be counterfeited: it is the work of God in the soul of the sinner. An unconverted man will condemn it. It would seem to him to be the gloom and the melancholy of religion. But, let him know that a saving conviction and consequent hatred of sin, however humiliating and painful it may be, will issue eventually in pardon and peace: it is the wound which will endear the Divine Physician: it is the tear which the Lord will record and treasure: it is the stroke which hews us from Nature's quarry ere we are builded together for the inhabitation of God.

Another evidence of the Spirit's grace and power will be—*A ceaseless restlessness till mercy and forgiveness be obtained.* A person as yet but imperfectly acquainted with religious truth, and as yet also apprehensive of wrath and danger on account of sin, will resort to duties—prayer, fasting, alms-deeds, and so on—for comfort and satisfaction. Injudicious and mistaken friends may advise repentance for the past, and a strict adherence to the Law in future: but "miserable comforters" will they be. After putting forth all the power and all the might which a sinful creature can command, he will find himself unable to keep and to fulfil the broad and spiritual commandments of the Moral Code. Every repeated failure will fill him with new alarm and terror: and must necessarily do so; for as the Law cannot afford us inclination or ability to keep it, so neither does it console us under our violations of it. It is, at best, "the Ministration of condemnation;" and "by the deeds of the Law can no man living be justified." The Holy Spirit, in due time, leads the quickened and enlightened soul to see this. When this is seen, the soul will begin to perceive and feel its need of a Saviour

—a Saviour that can heal its sorrows and give it rest and peace. Jesus Christ is known and believed to be that Saviour: but need I not some qualification for him? will now be the enquiry of the troubled heart. May I come to him just as I am? Must I not bring with me somewhat of personal goodness to recommend me to him?—Somewhat of good is sought and endeavoured: Long and arduous sometimes is the effort to subdue sin and to amend and improve the conduct, preparatory (as we conceive) to a simple recognition and belief of the righteousness of Jesus Christ:—but, where the Spirit of the Lord teaches, all that human might can affect, affords no real rest or satisfaction. The dove will be going to and fro in the earth, till it discovers the ark, and is sheltered kindly in its friendliness and quiet. It will eventually be found that “God justifieth the *ungodly* ;” that “Jesus hath received gifts for men ; yea, for the *rebellious* also, that the Lord God might dwell among them ;” and that the holiness, which the convinced and humbled sinner so sensibly needs, is not required as a Condition, but promised as a Gift, and secured infallibly as a Consequence of faith in Christ, and union, by the Spirit’s quickening, enlightening, and renewing power, with the Son of God. Now and not till now will there be true and enduring comfort. Light will beam in upon the anxious heart. The sinner will venture to come before God in the Name of Jesus. Diligence will be used in all appointed means. Belief will increase. We shall see that Jesus Christ is not only *able* but *willing* to save us unto the uttermost ; and this once distinctly seen, the soul will find “joy and peace in believing.” Amidst occasional fear and much remaining imperfection, the “peace of God” will, nevertheless, “keep our heart and mind through Jesus Christ.” This peace will demonstrate the reality

of the Spirit's operation : others, confessedly, may pretend to it : but the peace that is sought in an unwilling obedience to moral precepts, or in a conditional justification, will be found void of all gracious agency, and therefore also destitute of all intrinsic excellence and durability.

A further sure and unfailing evidence of efficacious influence is—*A supreme valuation of Jesus Christ.* It is the glory and the honour of God the Holy Ghost to “testify of Him.” The Spirit speaks not of himself, but of Christ. The multitude of the Christian world may assume the Name of Christ from the respectability attaching to it : they may compliment their Master, too, by an occasional obeisance : but “no form or comeliness will they see in him to desire him.” The world's sufficiency is in itself. It is quite easy with the worldling, in his mistaken apprehension, to make his peace with God at any time whensoever it may suit his convenience or inclination to do so. Our text he reverses, saying, ‘By my power and the might of mine arm, and not by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts.’ Amidst all the confusion of sentiment and conduct that prevails within him and around him, he can build, he fondly dreams, a tower whose top shall reach to heaven, and whereby he shall climb to the high abodes of bliss, and fare as well as those who “enter by the Door” into rest and glory. “We know not,” might many truly say, “whether there be any Holy Ghost.” Can we wonder, then, that the Lord Jesus Christ should be unknown to such or even despised and rejected by them ? No, verily : and to be consistent, they ought to renounce the Christian Name, and to stand forth before all in all their naked and infidel unregeneracy. Whereas, to the man whom the Holy Ghost makes Christian, Jesus will be all that is ami-

able, all that is lovely, all that is desirable. He will be found in every page of inspiration. He will be loved in all his offices. His power will be seen in every star that twinkles with the myriads of its fellows in the heavens: his smile will be discovered in every flower that blooms and lavishes its sweets upon our senses: his goodness will appear in the happiness of every creature: his grace in the redemption of every redeemed sinner; unparalleled excellence will be discovered in his blood, and the glory of eternity in his righteousness. The Spirit makes him "all" in the Believer's all. And though the Lord Jesus Christ may not directly and at once become thus supremely valuable to our souls, yet, if we be truly under Spiritual guidance, he *will* become so; and his becoming so, will be to our souls a most precious evidence of acceptance, pardon, and safety. I would you should read and ponder Romans viii. 14—18. Doubtful and worthless is all religion that savours not of Christ. Empty and poor will all ministrations of the Word be, wherein Christ obtains little or no mention. Never will the hearts of the millions of mankind be bowed down as the heart of one man, till "the Lord alone be exalted." Works acceptable to God, and pleasing in his sight, there can be none without the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit. Blessed, therefore, is the man who by the supernatural agency of the eternal Spirit can cordially adopt the Apostolic language, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

One other evidence only of Spiritual Influence shall be adduced ere we bring our remarks to a close, and that is, *A prevailing desire to be holy*, and to grow in

acquaintance with the scriptures of truth. Everything that evidences the regenerating grace of the Spirit involves this desire : all his operations terminate in our restoration to the image and favour of God. “Hunger and thirst after righteousness” will invariably predominate in the soul whom he quickens and renews. We do not begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh. Sin, as we have seen, is unutterably odious to the heaven-born man. It is that which beclouds his views ; depresses his hopes ; darkens the “glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ ;” and hinders the progress of the soul in love and knowledge : Its opposite will therefore be all and infinitely desirable. Whilst the mere moralist adorns himself with the decencies of exterior conduct, and is contented with the approval of man, the Christian Believer pants to be holy within, and to stand perfect and complete before God. Not, be it observed, that he expects his nature scripturally called “the old Adam,” to be renewed and sanctified ;—*that* he does not expect to be holy until it is built anew from the dust of death : but he wants “the new man,” the holy nature, the seed of unfailing life and salvation, to grow stronger, purer, and more prevalent within him. Grounded upon Christ, he wishes to “grow up in him.” He looks and begs for more and more of the Spirit’s transforming influence and teaching. Not by might nor by power in himself does he stand : no : “kept by the power of God through faith,” he “stands fast, holding the beginning of his confidence firm unto the end.” And the thought, ‘*I shall be holy,*’ ever and anon cheers him whilst conflicting with sin, the world, and Satan. Now, where this desire is dominant, there assuredly exists the Spirit’s hallowing agency ; and gathering, as he onward goes, fresh laurels for his Redeemer’s crown, the Christian conqueror shall ultimately be welcomed

to the world wherein dwelleth righteousness, and where he himself shall be like his Redeemer, altogether righteous. Propinquity will induce resemblance.

I have now demonstrated to you, Beloved, as I purposed, the necessity, the nature, and the evidence of Spiritual Influence. I wish you candidly and impartially to consider our remarks. Mysterious as it may be, I have endeavoured to bring the subject simply and practically before you. It involves, you see, the very essential qualities of real Christianity. It contradicts nothing which your Bible tells you : it harmonizes with its every truth. You see, too, how surely your own Church is founded on the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being its chief corner-stone. All its services acknowledge the fact, and beseech the aid of the Spirit's power and might. All its Ministers profess to be 'moved by the Holy Ghost' to assume the office which they sustain and exercise : nor will any one of them, really so influenced, forbear to insist on the necessity, the nature, and the evidence of the Spirit's operation. I have done what I could, and now is my work with the Lord and my judgment with my God. Various and contrary as human opinions are—slighted and contemned, too, as the experiences of the saints may be, the Church of Christ goes onward, nevertheless, to prevail and triumph to the fulness of its number and to the attainment of its hope. Noiseless may be her progress, as the Temple of old was in its construction : but sure is her foundation ; faithful is her Lord, and all-powerful the Spirit that animates, sustains, and comforts her. The glorious Gospel of the blessed God is proclaiming. Accessible are its saving truths to multitudes in their native languages. Messengers, on the swiftest wings of love, are saying to Earth's most debased and sinful children, "Why will ye die?" This

heaven-appointed sign of the end, is visible in our time. The days of rebuke and blasphemy are completing. Popery is ripening for its final overthrow. Infidelity will soon be judged : Israel and Judah be again acknowledged : the Church of the first-born be brought unto her Lord, and the earth be replenished with his glory. And while we joy in hope as possessing the earnest of the Spirit, and are sealed ourselves unto the day of redemption, let us, as Nehemiah and his associates did, “arise and build.” ‘Let us beg God of his great mercy so to work in all men’s hearts, by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, that the comfortable Gospel of his Son Christ may be truly preached, truly received, and truly followed in all places, to the beating down sin, death, the pope, the devil, and all the kingdom of Antichrist, that like scattered and dispersed sheep, being at length gathered into one fold, we may in the end rest all together in the bosom of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, there to be partakers of eternal and everlasting life, through the merits and death of Jesus Christ our Saviour.’

And now the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

FINIS.

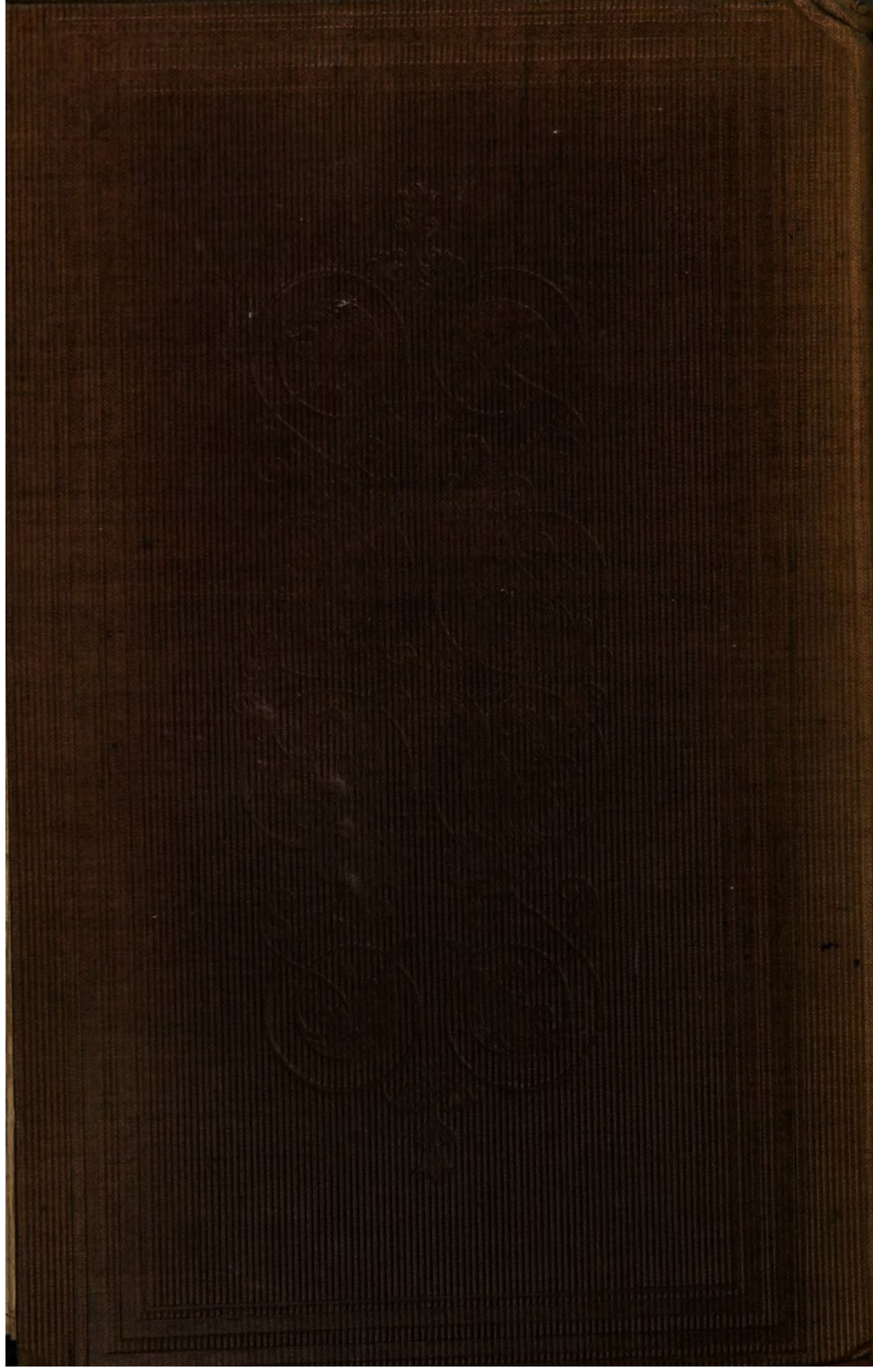
By the same Author,

Preparing for Publication, DISCOURSES on the Tabernacle ; its Furniture, Priesthood, Sacrifices, &c., considered with reference to the Present and Future Dispensations of God in the Earth.

The Country Clergyman's ADVICE to his Flock. Price 2s. 6d.

GOODNESS AND MERCY, as displayed in the experience and death of Deborah Curtis, late of Rampisham, Dorset. Price 6d. (Printed and sold by the Religious Tract Society.)

SUGGESTIONS on the literal or grammatical sense of holy Scripture. Price 9d. (Out of print at present.)



Mudge, William

Thirty Sermons on the leading doctrines and duties of Christianity

Derby 1840

Hom. 1028 m

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb10460839-7